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Mutara III, King of Ruanda. (Taken by Author)

Essay on the Common Law of Ruanda

J. Vanhove

Preface

101 Beyond the eastern shore of Lake Kivu extends a country of
563 high hills called Ruanda. Nestling in banana groves, innumerable
huts cling to the hillside, their smoke rising to the sky, and on the
summits the brisk wind sways the pink grasses of the pastures where
long-horned cattle graze. The exceptionally dense population con-
[161] sists of about 3,000,000 Bahutu of Bantu origin who are dominated by
some tens of thousands of Batutsi, Hamitic shepherds who have prob-
ably come down from the Ethiopian plateaus. Finally, here and
there, Batwa pygmoids, potters and hunters, live apart from the other
natives who despise them.

183 Europeans who first studied the customs of the country dis-
671 covered to their surprise that they showed a number of points in com-
mon with our feudalism. The tenure of land and of cattle as well as
the dependence of persons are under a [4] strict regulation which the
• [643] ruler of Ruanda has the absolute power to modify but which has, in
fact, remained unchanged throughout the ages.

177 Our occupation has obviously had the effect of modifying the
183 customs in many ways. For example, we could not approve of the
brutal evictions and attempts on life and liberty made in the name of
the right of the strongest. Evangelization has also introduced into the
heart of the native society notions of justice and gentleness which are
very different from the natives' original conceptions. However, despite
177 the efforts of our civil servants and our missionaries to attack what is
183 most to be condemned in it, native custom still largely holds its
563 sway due to the influence of the great Batutsi chiefs, who are eager
to maintain their authority intact, and also due to that of the sorcerers,
toothsayers, rain makers, and many others, who attempt to maintain
the traditional law by playing on the credulity and superstitious mind
of the Banyarwanda [Banyaruanda] and thus protect their prestige and
their revenues. In addition, while realizing the protection we give them
in repressing arbitrary actions, the Bahutu submit to the changes we

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SECTION II. PROPERTY

1. Property in General

421 The Banyarwanda have a less abstract idea of property than we have. It is comparable to that of possession.

On the other hand, no differentiation is made between personal property and real estate. Property is given different names according to its nature and use. The Banyarwanda divide their property [into the following categories]: amatungo (animals); ibintu, a generic name applicable to the ruho, imilima (fields); ubgatsi (pasturage); imyaka (crops); and urutoke (banana plantations); ibiri (trees); intwari (weapons and cutting instruments); ibikolesho (hoes, pickaxes, baskets, churns); imyambaro (clothing).

2. Landed Property

423 True landed property exists in Ruanda, while in the Belgian Congo the natives consider that the bare ownership of the land belongs to the souls of the departed and that they themselves only have usufruct.

• [643] All the land in the country belongs to the Mwami who relinquishes its use successively to the various chiefs and subchiefs. These, 423 in turn, cede an isambu (land sold) or concede an umwatano (land 425 leased) to the Bahutu in consideration of a price or a payment consisting of a certain percentage of future crops (ichyata umulima, lit., 427 gift in order to have a field).

The Muhutu holds his land in a more or less precarious way. Even if he makes his payments regularly [42] his land may be taken away from him one day, if, for example, he neglects to pay the customary dues to the chiefs and the king. In this case he may be deprived of all or part of his land, but the last crop is not taken from him (1).

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1. An appreciably different administration of property exists in the western part of Bunyambiriri, the extreme north of Ndiza,

423 obliged to submit to the same obligations as his predecessor. If he
[425] is a Mututsi, he is not required to pay any ground rent, and the chief gives him a pasture in addition.

Rights of way and of access are not private. The hill people may move about freely on each other's land. This is also true of the cattle for which special paths are made.

622 In the case of a dispute in matters of landed property, litigation
692 is taken to the hill chief who goes to the place and, after having heard the witnesses, decides between the plaintiffs.

3. Customary Law of Hunting

224 Customary laws of hunting are very numerous. Of these we will quote only a few of the most frequent cases.

A native hunting alone who has killed an ordinary antelope (impongo) takes the meat and skins the animal.

224 Hunting with beaters is organized by the chief who decides on
622 the land to be beaten after having taken the advice of the [44] expert Batutsi or Bahutu hunters and following the indications of the trackers. The chief also chooses the beaters from among the least good shots. To stimulate their zeal in this thankless task, he promises them pots of beer if the hunt is successful.

224 The natives are required to take part in the hunt, but they fulfill this obligation willingly as it is a much appreciated entertainment and also a source of profit.

Whoever first wounds an animal during a battue or beat, is presumed to have killed it. He is entitled to the skin and one rear leg. The meat is divided among all the Batutsi and Bahutu hunters. The hunter who has killed several antelopes may keep the skin of one animal.

224 Whoever finds an animal that has been killed must return it to
643 the hunters. At least theoretically, game belongs to the king and skins of any value (1) must be turned over to him, especially those of

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1. Skins of marsh antelopes are much appreciated by the Batutsi because of their long silky fur with which they make bed coverings. Skins of the "bush buck" and

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leopard are used as dance ornaments
by the intore pages.

- 224 the otter (inzibyi or igihura), the marsh antelope (mpala), the
● [643] "bush bock" (inzole), the lion, and the leopard, as well as ivory
tusks.

[622] If a wild beast such as a lion or leopard has been killed,
its skin must be turned over to the chief who in exchange gives the
hunters a sterile cow as ingororano (2).

2. Cf. Property, Ownership of Cattle,
p. 48.

224 When the hill chief hunts with his people, he keeps some of
622 the skins and gives the others to the provincial chief, who in turn
643 keeps some of them and, if he considers it advantageous to himself,
sends the others to the Mwami. If the hill chief has killed a lion
or a leopard, the skin must be turned over to the Mwami. If there
are two skins they are divided between the king and the provincial
chief. The [45] hill chief may keep a leopardskin only if the hunt
has been particularly fruitful.

224 The native who has killed three elephants has the sole right
to the tusks of the third animal killed.

224 Finally, a hunter is forbidden to take any part of a crocodile
825 he has killed. The animal with its paws loaded with stones must be
thrown to the bottom of the river, for the Banyarwanda believe that
the body of the saurian contains a violent poison and they want to
prevent its being used.

224 When an animal is pointed out, the beaters who have gone
forward into the thickets where they are almost invisible and the
hunters who have followed them must indicate their presence by a
low whistle. Hunting accidents are regulated by customary law (1).

1. Cf. Penal Law, p. 98.

4. Ownership of Heavy Cattle

422 a) Generalities. 231

[643] The Mwami is the owner of all the cattle in Ruanda or at least of all females kept for breeding purposes. The great chiefs (abatware) are charged by the king to watch over his cattle in the different provinces. Also, the sale of heifers cannot take place without his permission.

On the other hand, the holder of sterile cows or bulls may give away or slaughter these animals as he wishes.

[643] In a province the native who has acquired a cow for breeding purposes has usufruct and has no redress if the Mwami takes away the animal he has bought along with its young. The umutware w'umukenke (2) can oppose the removal of cattle from the province.

2. Cf. Government and Administration, Political Division, p. 85.

422 Any native who settles in another province must abandon his cattle
622 [46] unless he has the chief's permission to take it with him. When
628 a native leaves his province, leaving his cattle behind, to settle in another, his new chief usually gives him a herd of the same size as the one he has lost. If he escapes from his district carrying off his cattle surreptitiously, his former chief claims the herd. In the past if he was refused he would endeavor to capture a herd of equal value belonging to the deserter's new chief, and an armed clash would invariably result from such a dispute. Today the dispute must be submitted to the Mwami. He eventually orders the new chief to return the cattle, and if the latter is unwilling to do so, he may take from him one or more herds.

Before the European occupation a dissatisfied chief could take all or part of his cattle without previous permission from the Mwami. In this case the chief was "Mwami of his umugaragu."

422 The cowherds (abashumba) in the service of the cattle holders
231 are authorized to keep for themselves part of the milk from the animals entrusted to them. They can be discharged in case of negligence.

563 The Batwa, however, stand entirely apart from and below the others. They are not slaves who are forced to render services, but they are regarded as excluded from the society of the others, as outcasts whom the Batussi and the Bahutu despise and detest. They are considered animals, not human beings (No. 19, p. 541). The Batussi and Bahutu do indeed buy all kinds of handicraft products, especially pots, from them and also employ them as medicine men, musicians, and watchmen, but they never enter into closer relationships with them. (In Ruanda it is more likely that exceptions will be made, especially at the royal court.) A Mutussi or a Muhutu will never enter the hut of a Mutwa, he will never eat or drink with him, nor will he use a pot or a garment which has already been used by a Mutwa. [95] Only one thing is permitted: the [576] Mutwa may greet the Murundi and return his greeting although in a different manner than a Murundi would have done.

576 Depending on the social status of the person who tenders
554 a greeting and the person greeted, there are considerable differences between the forms of greeting used among the Barundi. In all cases the greeting is tendered and returned with a certain amount of ceremonial politeness so much so that some observers maintain that greetings are a kind of religious act. Even the words of the stereotyped greeting often suggest a religious connection (see p. 46). It is perhaps for this reason, but even more likely because of the great innate or learned politeness of the Murundi, that each of them would consider it a serious insult if he were not greeted or if his greeting were not returned. Corresponding to the social stratification of the people, we may differentiate three large groups of greetings.

576 1. Greeting the king. The person greeting the king kneels down,
643 bends toward him, claps his hands in his direction, and calls
554 out: "uganse umwami" (command me, King) or "ugire umwami" (may you enjoy good health, King). The members of the royal family, the Baganwa, who for the most part rule the provinces as head chiefs, are greeted in a similar fashion.

554 2. Greeting the batwale who are not of royal blood and the lesser
576 chiefs of communities. The person tendering the greeting bows

Plate 11

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Batussi Delegation of King Mutaga in Usumbura
(Photo. by Hans Meyer, 1911)

• [643]



King Mutaga (*) of Urundi with Batussi Entourage
(Photo. by Captain von Langenn-Steinkeller)

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Urundi King Mweni Kisabo, died 1908
(Photo. by "White Fathers" Urundi)

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Urundi King Mweni Kisabo, Carried on a
Traveling Litter
(Photo. by "White Fathers," Urundi)

2: Meyer--247 K-5 (1911) 1916

FO42 Rundi FO42

Plate 13

231 one might be inclined to believe. The cows yield
 [234] little milk, and part of this milk is used for making
 butter, which is employed not for food, but for a
 cosmetic. Cattle-aying is (or rather was) not fre-
 quent and only young steers, sterile cows, or old beasts
 are butchered. The cattle are lean, the pastures
 usually second-rate. And whatever the cattle-
 breeders themselves may say, they are mainly
 vegetarians: but the less immediately productive the
 cattle-breeders' occupation appears, the greater and
 the nobler the rank it confers to them. It is mainly
 [556] an outward sign of wealth, with a superior social
 standing attached to it that enables the higher classes
 to procure women and claim the devoted and faithful
 services of the males. It is worth remarking that the
 [462] cattle are cared for by the men, not—save in ex-
 ceptional cases—by the women.

241 Barundi economy is based on agriculture, which is
 mainly in the hands of the Bahutu, to whom we must
 add some impoverished Batutai and most of the
 Batwa. Sorghum, beans and peas are the chief
 products, but cassava culture is spreading to-day.
 [273] Bananas are used for brewing beer. (The agricultural
 techniques are very primitive, though sometimes more
 advanced in some respects than might be expected:
 hardly any other implement than the hoe is com-
 monly employed, and yet manuring and irrigation are
 known.) Agriculture uses male as well as female
 [462] labour, but the latter is more common. Among the
 Batwa only women till the land, and among the
 Bahutu there are men who take no part in agri-
 culture.

000 This general information will enable us now to
 understand the chief subject of this address: the
 intercourse between the elements of the Barundi
 population where vicinity plays so small a part.

The position towards the political chiefs

643 The country's unity is chiefly based on the sultan's
 796 personal power; his prestige is clearly visible in the
 general mourning and the curious burial rites conse-
 quent on his death. Also characteristic was the
 annual recurrence of an important religious festival
 usually held in our month of December and called
umugwuro, the sorghum festival, the sorghum
 desecralization: only after the festival could the
 people start sowing sorghum in their fields. The
umugwuro, however, concerned other agricultural
 products, as well as cattle and game. It included the
 [778] exhibition of a sacred drum (*koryenda*) and a hiero-
 gamy—which the king achieved with the greatest
 secrecy. It involved, as well for the festivities them-
 selves as for the preparation of the requisites the
 hereditary collaboration of men and women picked
 from every social level and every region, however
 distant. And so the festival created stronger ties

[p.14 (A)]

643 between the various elements of the people; it was
796 supposed to be a large contribution to the land's
fertility and the country's welfare, and in all this the
part played by the king was prominent.

643 Only in fact was the king's power limited. He
631 transferred the leadership of parts of his sultanates
to some chiefs, almost in every case relatives (brothers,
uncles, cousins), members of the royal family
(*baganwa*). In their turn these would establish
subchiefs chosen among their relatives, or the aristocracy
(*bafasoni*), or even Batutsi commoners, but
seldom among the Bahutu. The division reached
very far and the last elements of it were not only single
hills, but even parts of a hill. And although the
ensuing intrication and divided hierarchy remind us
forcibly of our own feudo-vassalic middle ages, and
appear consequently most unstable, the Barundi
system, if we set aside some violent revolutions,
possessed some sort of stability and could carry on
thanks to its practically hereditary organization.
Chiefs, subchiefs and all who had availed themselves
of the deep-seated division of authority were naturally
possessed of rights over the common people and
were entitled to demand from them various privileges,
usually defined by local custom, and which
ranged from a present of beer to well-determined
contributions or vaguer corvées (*services*).

423 Some scholars have maintained that the *mwami*
661 definitely had a right of possession over the land of
the whole of his sultanate. But the truth is that
land was not an object of property for the *mwami*
or for commoners and the *mwami* and his representatives
simply had to allow its utilization and choose the people
to carry it out. Such designations were, just as the political
leaderships, more or less unstable, more or less precarious;
there exists a heredity in fact; but it is possible for a chief,
should he care to do so, to eject the tenants. Besides, the
abandoned or untilled lands are at his disposal. The
system in general enables members of the leading classes
as well as members of the subject classes to constitute estates
with the only difference that the former will possess large
herds of cattle and have their lands tilled by people liable
to unpaid service while the latter have only very few cows
and must depend on their own labour and that of their families.

The political leader's say in agricultural matters
also solves the difficult problem of proportioning field
and pasture-lands. The chief will not allow the latter
to be reduced, and the threat to the cattle-breeder is
further avoided by the chief's right to use the sorghum
fields for pastures after the harvest (*ibishaka-shaka*)
either for themselves or for others.

423 The territory of an important chief, with its
intermixing complex of herds, estates, revenues, and
services, very often extended over large, sometimes

[p.14 (R)]

THE KINGDOM OF RUANDA

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*Man and the Non-material World**Imana, the Creator*

Imana, the creator, is a person. He is conceived as an intelligence, a will, an emotivity. He is extremely powerful: 'the plant protected by *Imana* is never hurt by wind', '*Imana* has very long arms', '*Imana* goes above any shield'. He is non-material. His action influences the whole world; but Ruanda is his home where he comes to spend the night. He is always invoked as 'God of Ruanda' (*Imana y'i Ruanda*). 776

Imana is essentially good: 'your enemy is digging a pitfall for you, *Imana* prepares your exit', '*Imana* gives, he does not sell'. This is why he takes care of men and why there is no cult in his honour. He is so good, I have been told, that he does not require any offering.

There is a special creative act of *Imana* at the beginning of each person's life. Impregnation in itself would not be sufficient to produce a new human being. This is why the young wife, at evening, leaves a few drops of water in a jar. *Imana*, as a potter, needs some water to shape the clay into a child in her womb. Then, after birth, *Imana* decides what life is to be for that individual: happy or unhappy. If, later on, a man is miserable, poverty-stricken, in bad health, it is said that he was created by *Ruremakwaci*. This way of speaking has led some observers to understand that besides *Imana*, there was another creator, perhaps subordinate, perhaps an evil spirit. As a matter of fact, *Ruremakwaci* is the name given to *Imana* when he does not create very successfully, when 'he is tired', or, for some inscrutable reason, decides that a certain destiny will be unhappy. This is consistent with the Ruanda linguistic habit of assigning different names to one cause according to its different effects. 776
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Imana's influence is thought to be always beneficial for human beings. It happens very often that obstacles are placed in the way of his action by malevolent agencies of the invisible world, but from him only good things come. This is not completely consistent with the belief in an unfortunate predestination by *Imana*. It should be noted, first, that the theory of predestination has not a very deep impact on the attitude of Banyarwanda. A person who thinks himself unhappy, and might thus suspect that he has been predestined to a miserable life, does not seem to be submerged by a feeling of doom. Unless he is brought to despair by a situation from which there is no escape, he will go on living and trying to improve his condition. Secondly, this inconsistency will be better understood if we consider the attitude of Banyarwanda towards the king (the *Mwami*) in similar circumstances. [152]
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The *Mwami*, the supreme authority is good, yet he may be harmful and cruel to some of his subjects. As his power is absolute, as he is magically identified with Ruanda itself, he may never be criticized. Thus the victims of some arbitrary royal decision, and their friends, go on saying that the king is good but that his favourite counsellor is very bad and is responsible for what they suffer. As might be expected, in Ruanda God is conceived

642 individuals through a continuous chain of lesser chiefs." This regime resulted from the invasion and conquest of Ruanda by the Hamites. The monarchical system was introduced by them in order "to keep the subject people within a very tight administrative network." (1) Ac-

1. Les Relations entre l'évolution sociale et l'évolution religieuse

/The Relations between Social and Religious Evolution/ by

Rev. Fr. Pinard de la Boullaye,

S. J. (Correspondant, January 25, 1929.)

cording to the classification adopted by Deniker (2), the Banyarwanda

2. Races et peuples de la terre

/Races and Peoples of the Earth/, 1900, p. 151.

Deniker divides peoples into savage, semicivilized, and civilized.

belong in their degree of culture to the first group by the Bahutu and Batwa, but it is also proper to place them in the second category on account of the Hamites, who gave their conquered subjects an organization superior to that of the peoples in the first stage and a higher degree of culture. They form an intermediate group between the first two divisions of this classification.

643 The land is governed by a king with unlimited and hereditary powers (we are speaking of the past). The symbol of royalty is a drum, a sacred object, a sort of palladium referred to as Kalinga. /38/

Like all African potentates, the Hamitic prince formerly held powers of life and death over his subjects. Everything belonged to him in his own right, lands and people, crops and livestock. He

631 would designate the dignitaries and the provincial governors, who were almost invariably chosen from the ranks of the Batutsi, the noble and conquering race.

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These in turn would select their own assistants, who became "hill chiefs." The great chiefs, although they owned a number of dwellings in their respective districts, seldom lived among their people.

[632]

Ever surrounded by jealous and often malevolent rivals, they were exposed to intrigues. Espionage and delation were endemic at court. This is why the great dignitaries remained by the king's side in order to guard against all eventualities.

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Hamitic royalty, once it became powerful, immediately acquired great brilliance: United under a single scepter, the Banyarwanda became one of the best-organized Negro peoples and spread beyond their natural boundaries to defeat and subject to tribute the enemy nations around them. The union of the Bahutu clans took place thanks to the increasingly centralized administrative organization of the new inhabitants.

The Hamitic kings never lost the simplicity of their ancient mores. They kept up their interest in their herds of cattle, which they regularly asked to see, and they would ask and remember the names and genealogy of the animals. On the battlefields they were hardly distinguishable from their warriors, whose outfit and weapons they wore: a mere goatskin around the loins, a spear, a bow and arrows.

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In peacetime, however, etiquette would elevate the monarch and isolate him from his subjects. One could not visit him without asking for an audience and being announced first. This was so at least as far as common people were concerned, for dignitaries and favorites acted with greater freedom and even took certain liberties. According to court protocol, one had /39/ to clap hands (gukom' amashi) when appearing before the monarch.

The "lords" would throng around him to fill out the government offices and to make up the court (1). Not only were princes of royal

1. "The Hamitic Court!" In dealing with the persons and times whose history we are describing, one must not think of the courts established in civilized countries. The Batutsi Court does not

644 with flagrant disgraces and the official executions that sometimes
662 resulted from them.

People became madly infatuated with everything abnormal or enigmatic, with the predictions of sorcerers, with ghosts, crimes, sudden or mysterious death.

And since the regular court attendants had a thorough knowledge of their neighbors' genealogy, past, history, acquaintances, and interests, it is easy to guess that the daily chronicle also concerned private quarrels, bereavements, marriages, and births. This was the usual pabulum of conversation. Similar in this respect to a certain French king who associated largely with lowly people, fortunetellers, astrologists, apothecaries, wig makers, and even the executioner, the Hamitic monarch also liked to surround himself with master cooks, archiaters, healers, magicians, and charlatans of all sorts to whom he occasionally distributed honors and appointments (1).

1. Some striking examples of those royal favors are known. Some subjects in most humble circumstances managed to obtain the hand of a Hamitic princess and to be raised to noble rank.

643 One can easily imagine what the royal administration was like
661 under the circumstances. No desire to encourage the arts, to favor agriculture, to improve the people's condition. The rights of the people exist theoretically, but they are regulated by no organic text and are too often dependent on the whims of royal and local power.

Infatuated with their own glory and exclusively preoccupied with their own pleasure, the sovereigns had no ambition other than to raise their prestige and to enjoy life.

The kings did not resemble one another from one reign to the next.

A warrior would succeed a peaceful man. Some, cruel and brutal, had the bloody whims and disordered passions of despots and degenerates. Others, of /42/ simpler tastes, led a peaceful existence and allowed the people to breathe.

643 One hears of sovereigns who liked and practiced the "things
661 of the mind," such as Yuhi-Mazimpaka, whose literary output is still
highly prized by Black intellectuals.

644 The king's wives and concubines lived away from the court.
"Either he had noticed their beauty himself..., or their charms had
been brought to his attention by the great who were sure to please him
in so doing."

Among the reasons for the profusion of wives in the sovereign's
harem, "the yearnings of the heart and the demands of the senses
both played their part" above all else. Many a prince surrendered
without restraint to voluptuous activities. Yet one hears of some
romances adorned with the charms of literature which may actually
have taken place.

842 It must be admitted in all fairness that a powerful idea pre-
sided over the establishment of the family among the Hamites. Like
the Hebrews and so many other ancient peoples, the Batutsi regarded
large numbers of children, and especially sons, as an honor, a glory,
and a source of strength. They considered themselves fortunate if they
could watch the growth of their children and their children's children
to the third and fourth generations.

545 A large progeny seemed to them a sure guarantee for the future
578 of their race. Let us add that peace could not reign in their homes.
For among the legitimate wives, there was almost invariably a
favorite. "Competing among themselves, competing for their children,
they drove the latter to rivalry, and the husband, following his
preferences or giving way to his weakness, did not always share
equitably his heart, his favors, and his goods." (1) /43/

1. The loved wife is called
nkundwakazi, the hated wife
mbikazi. A rival is called mukeba
or umugore w'ishyari, that is to
say, literally, "jealously woman
/or wife/."

595 One can easily imagine the troubles and conflicts caused by an excessive number of wives and children.

The history of the Hamitic princes of Ruanda contains "pages soiled and as if bloodied by the tale of passions which set them one against the other and which, unleashed with brutal violence, " eventually gave rise to tragedies and palace revolutions. Family unity and family spirit have never gained anything from polygamy. The history of the Hamites of Ruanda is here to prove and confirm this.

644 The king's mother held first place among the harem princesses, and reigned along with her son. She was "shown the most respectful consideration, and whoever wished to obtain some favor from the monarch had no better recourse than to see her first. "

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643 It has been said that a people must be well disciplined in order to grow prosperous and powerful. The Hamites' strength resided in their courage and organization.

Those who know the Hamites cannot but admire among their qualities perseverance in an undertaking and obedience to chiefs. One must recognize in these political and diplomatic beings, and this is to their credit, a thorough self-possession and great calmness. As true leaders, they rarely give way to anger, and their violent feelings rarely show.

868 Their apprenticeship to life begins early.

From childhood on, indeed, the young Batutsi devote themselves to real exercises in sports, under the supervision of the Mwami or of the great chiefs. They practice endurance and bravely bear the fatigue of the lengthy and frequent exercises of guhamiriza (dances indigenous to the Batutsi). For many years they remain as pages (intore) in the service of the Mwami or of the provincial governors, in order to be trained to life and to win the favors of currently powerful figures. /44/

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His reign, being recent, is well known, and the tale of his expeditions is still to be heard from the lips of those of his contemporaries who survived him. His popularity is almost equal to that of his grandfather Ruganzu II, whose deeds and actions, badly distorted by legend as they are, have been preserved and are still the subject of many a fireside conversation. Lwabugiri's shifts of mood were most interesting.

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His revenges, like his bloodthirsty whims, were short lived. He would raise the children of his victims and adopt young captives for whom he took a fancy, shower them with wealth, and admit them into his family.

His immediate successor, Mibambge IV Rutalindwa, barely remained on the throne for a year. He was overthrown by Kabale, the most powerful chief of the Hamitic Bega clan.

So as not to fall alive into the hands of his enemies, the vanquished king took his own life. Mussinga, one of Lwabugiri's youngest sons, was immediately enthroned under the name of Yuhi IV.

Through his mother Kanjogera, he was a nephew of the ambitious Kabale, who was regent before the young prince came of age. The Banyiginya clan, from which the royal family is issued and which had until then wielded a preponderant influence at court, was stripped of its property. The most outstanding chiefs of the vanquished party were relentlessly killed by the Bega people, who divided the government of the provinces among themselves over the corpses of their victims. The Bega men, embittered because they had been kept away from public affairs, were avenging once and for all the inferior position in which they felt /93/ they had been held for such a long time by their rivals.

One may ask whether Kabale when he gave his nephew the royal name of Yuhi did not do so intentionally.

Two categories of kings are distinguished: warrior kings and peaceful kings (from the verb guteka, "to sit." (I))

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1. The same verb guteka also means "to cook" (kupika in Kiswahili).

The name which is given to them on the day of their enthronement binds and commits them throughout their reign to a certain course of

643 action. "Ruganzu" is a war name, and so is "Kigeri." Ruganzu II
 173 Ndori, as recounted by one tradition, had suffered so much (yari
 551 yarushye chyane) that in order to spare his successors as much as possible of the anxieties, sorrows, and fatigue he had endured, he demanded that his name of "Ruganzu" should vanish forever with him into the grave. He thought that he would reduce thereby the number of future wars. The titles of "mutara" and "Yuhi" commit to peace those to whom they are given, who are not permitted to cross rivers (ntibambuk' uruzi). To break this "taboo" would make them and their realm subject to great misfortunes.

701 Thus, it was not Mutara himself who conquered the Gissaka. In case of a necessary war or expedition, the sovereign appoints two generals, one of whom (umugabe) has command of military operations while the other holds a mere honorary rank. He is said to exercise an occult and magic influence over the opponents, who cannot fail to be conquered if he fulfills his role properly. In the course of his expeditions, Lwabugiri always had at his side one of those generals with superstitious functions. They are called Abagaba.

Book IV

(First Fascicle)

The Royal Court

(Its Posts, Privileges, Mores, and Customs)

644 /348/ The object of the present study is the organization of the royal court, its posts and offices, its customs and festivals (1).

1. In order to designate the court and capital as they are here and now, the Banyarwanda use the word

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ibgami, "at the king's."
In speaking of the ancient royal residences, they use the noun umurwa, plural imirwa, or else ikigabiro, plural ibigabiro. As for the term umuhango (plural imihango), it signifies "mores, customs, traditions," hence the name Abanyamihango given to the "keepers of the customs."

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We remind the reader that the native government is an absolute and hereditary monarchy.

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The sovereign is master of the land and all it contains; he deals with the life and goods of his subjects as he pleases. Until recently his power knew no bounds of any sort and was wholly dependent upon his whims or good will. Imana (God) was no more powerful than he. Any attempt to draw a comparison between the two was formerly regarded as a crime of high treason. God and the King could, at best, be one and the same person.

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The subjects, therefore, tended to be regarded as things from which to draw as much pleasure and well-being as possible.

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Their own worth and usefulness were assessed and measured only with reference to the king. Let us add that the welfare of the kingdom, although it was not disregarded, could only come second in the thoughts of the king. Prior to the arrival of the Europeans, the dignitaries of the realm to whom the king assigned the government of the provinces were compelled to spend most of their time at court. The Hamitic princes were very eager to keep the nobility close to them. They were always on the alert and daily surveyed the lords and courtiers who surrounded them (2). The latter belong /349/ almost

2. From Saint Simon we learn that the situation was the same under Louis XIV. "It is a demerit

644 appointed bards (abachurabgenge), as well as literary jousts or men
538 of choice language called Abasizi, whose only role is to refresh the
king's memory or to beguile his leisure with tasteful improvisations.
Even the commoners are not insensitive to literature. There is not
a single Munyarwanda /Banyarwanda/ who is not keenly interested in
the legends, narratives, fables, moral or humorous tales, riddles,
plays on words, jokes, etc., belonging to the oral literature.

644 Every post at the capital has its own traditions which must be
scrupulously observed. We shall attempt to provide a short description
of the duties and regulations connected with those offices, and of the
practices and formalities to which the king must submit on the one
hand and his subjects on the other.

The reader should not be surprised to hear that there is
etiquette and ceremonial at court.

It is easy to imagine the oddity of a circle such as that of the
court, where such varied figures rub shoulders within such a relatively
small space: lords, courtiers, disciples of Aesculapius and vulgar
charlatans, servants, sorcerers and diviners of various sorts, caterers,
stewards, dancers, pages, keepers of the traditions, official chroniclers,
literary men, etc., to list but a few. /353/ This whole world exists,
thinks, and acts for the sake of the king alone. It is a true medieval
court with, moreover, pagan mores where the element of sorcery
predominates.

128 Laymen unfamiliar with Africa will be able to form an idea
of what a king and his court represent in a Black land. What we shall
say of the former political situation, the royal mores that prevailed,
the human tributes and bloody bondage, will not only describe the
ancient times but also demonstrate the respect that surrounded the
643 person of the king, who was regarded by his subjects as a demigod.
When viewed in the past, his bloody whims, far from being injurious
to his reputation, only served to strengthen his power and his majesty.
Primitive souls are awed by displays of brute force.

Among other interesting details, one will find in these pages
the more or less rational origin, derived from legend or history, of
many a practice and custom that still exists today.

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5526. "The dog that runs like the wind" (Nyakayaga).7. "The dog with fringes (with long hair)" (Nyagayonga).

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Among the prototypes or figures who appear in this legend, Ryangombe is the one most highly honored.

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He is regarded as a sort of hunter-king who made volcanoes his favorite dwelling place after his death.

According to the same narrative, he still enjoys the pleasures of the hunt with his sons, companions, and favorites in those high mountainous and wooded regions. The Batutsi, Bahutu, and Batwa have participated in this cult in large numbers. They observe its /369/ rites faithfully and observe the rules of the arcana. The ceremonies take place mostly at night. Each of the adepts appeals to the spirit or spirits for whom he has a special devotion. The Batutsi have chosen those whose life most closely parallels their own.

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The chiefs do not like to mix with their subjects to honor those powerful spirits, but they seek out the help of the Bahutu and Batwa who belong to this cult and have them dance and sing in honor of Ryangombe and his companions. The Bahutu and Batwa alone take part in the ritual processions and collections which are carried out through the villages in summertime.

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The gestures of this cult are pervaded with earnest and impressive seriousness. Initiation, confirmation, ritual feasts, the taking on and carrying out of vows, the collections and processions, all take place secretly, away from prying eyes. Laymen are not allowed to come near the gatherings, and jests and insults directed at the initiates were seriously punished in the old times. A former queen, Nyiramulema (a wife of King Mutara), was crucified upon the ground in the courtyard of her dwelling by the imandwa for having ridiculed their ceremonies. The tomb of the unfortunate woman lies at Savé, in the Nyarigina quarter.

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II. Official Posts of Great Importance from the Standpoint of the Crown (Ingoma) as well as from that of the Executive.

Generals and Official Drummers.

Executioners, Capital Punishment, and the "Pit" of the Bugessera.

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1. The generals or commanders of the armed forces.

644 forebears. Along with the deeds of the past, they must preserve the
814 memory of each king's name, the names of the queen mother, of the
king's immediate ancestors, and of the tribe to which they belonged.

Needless to say, critical sense has not yet appeared in the
land. It happens sometimes that the Court historians and keepers of
the traditions disagree about some detail which is now forgotten or
[787] in dispute. In such cases divinatory sacrifices are offered in order to
find out what the king should be told (1).

1. See "Founding of the Hamitic
Kingdom of Ruanda" /Book II,
not translated/ for opinions re-
garding the authenticity of the
first /few/ sovereigns. As far
as the beginnings of the kingdom
are concerned, the traditional
documentation is of greater
value to ethnology than to history.

In spite of their inherent faults and imperfections, the epics
nevertheless are not lacking in interest or charm. Through them we
can grasp at first hand the thoughts of the Banyarwanda, their feelings,
their /375/ ideas about life, their love of their native soil, their
attachment to old customs and memories of the past. They reveal
the pathetic sorrow caused by foreign invasions, and the enthusiasm
inspired by eventual triumph.

[647] 7. The keepers of the traditions belong to the important
Abiru clan. Their role is to preserve the unity and continuity of
customs at the capital and throughout the realm. The supreme chief
of this corporation is the chief of the Batsobe, whose position entails
numerous and varied functions.

644 In accordance with a popular tradition, he is personally en-
● 643 trusted with the task of collecting the umbilical cord (umukungwa) of
787 each of the king's sons, as well as their teeth, including their milk
teeth. Then, when the time comes to determine the heir to the throne,
it is this personage who has the honor of presiding over the selection.

- 644 According to popular belief, this choice is made in a very interesting
 ● 643 manner. The umbilical cords of the young princes are buried separate-
 787 ly in pots of ficus wood (umwuko), with gourd, sorghum, eleusine,
 and native spinach (issogi) seeds planted all around them (1). The

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1. These seeds are designated by the name of mbuto nkuru, that is to say, "the major seeds." Eleusine and sorghum play an important role in the diet by yielding a sort of native bread. Spinach is also highly valued because of the flavor it lends to the beans with which it is cooked. The Banyarwanda also include in this category the seeds of a special gourd called inzungwane, which is hollowed out when ripe. It is used to store beer, and it is this relationship to pombe, so highly appreciated by the natives, which lends so much importance to the seed.

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According to another popular belief, the successor to the throne is the one among the king's sons born with the "major seeds" in his right hand.

After subjugating the Bahutu by force, the Hamites insured their obedience by exploiting their credulity.

future holder of the drum is pointed out by the most plentiful harvest. According to these naïve people, the umbilical cords are /376/ then discarded except for that of the crown prince, which must be preserved (1).

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1. In actual practice it is the king himself who designates his heir directly during his lifetime, or indirectly through executors, who make known the king's last will after his death.

When the throne was left vacant, there often ensued contests which gave rise to complications and bloody tragedies.

The Murutsi /Batutsi/ chief of the most powerful clan sometimes made his own choice among the sons of the dead king and forced acceptance of his candidate. This happened in 1896, when Kabale rebelled against the rightful heir, Mibambge IV Rutalindwa, and had Yuhi IV Musinga, his own nephew and the present king, elected instead.

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8. The royal corporation of undertakers called Abanyamugogo. Rightly or wrongly, they claim to be descendants of those who handled the funeral of Ruganzu II Ndori.

We shall mention them again in the section dealing with funeral rites.

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9. Executioners.

They are usually chosen from among the Batwa.

So far as ordinary criminals are concerned, executions take place at the capital. High-ranking culprits are often placed in the custody of a chief, who leads them to the Buberuka or Bugessera provinces.

The unfortunate victims are strangled or smitten down with spears, and then tossed into the pit (urwobo) of Bayanga or into the shifting marsh of Nkonde. Aside from strangulation and drowning,

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"Why don't you make the sky weep if you wish to find a remedy for your suffering!" people would shout at them as a joke (1).

1. Izuba libaririre!

"If it does not rain at such-and-such a time, if you do not make our fields green again, you will die".... And execution followed close upon the threat.

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Like the king, the great Batutsi chiefs sat in judgment and passed sentence in their provinces when they resided there or whenever they were passing through. They were not all alike. Among them there were just and humane men, and one likes to believe that they were in the majority. Some nevertheless left a bad reputation on account of their cruelty. It is said that two of them took pleasure in having the arms of their victims bound behind their backs with wire drawn so tightly that the elbows met and the wire sank into the flesh.... Many persons died of this unique and atrocious torment. Another dignitary had those upon whom he wanted to wreak his revenge immobilized and made to lie on their backs.

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Then he would make his victim drink a pitcher of beer or water through a gourd shaped like a funnel. A third man, leaning heavily on his spear, would pierce his victim's foot and thus nail him to the ground. A high dignitary punished those who had displeased him by seizing two of their fingers and pulling them apart with all his might, thus tearing the tissues that connected them. Fortunately, however, those were exceptions which should be ascribed to paganism, the primitiveness of customs, the cruelty of the times, the criminal procedures then in effect, the passions aroused by clan struggles, the competition for power, the revolutions, and sometimes also the proud and savage conceit of chiefs who were too young to govern. /380/

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In order to gain an accurate understanding of the more that prevailed at the time, the reader must be reminded that the life of a man counted for very little in the eyes of the king and of the great chiefs. Subjects of Lwabusiri who are still alive today (he died in 1895) report that in order to show his skill or to judge the strength of his bow, the sovereign would shoot at the first person who appeared

643 along the road, to the sanctimonious applause of his entourage. Once
661 he even tried his spear against one of his chief lieutenants. The latter
had the audacity to evade the blow, pick up the weapon, and hurl it
back at him with equal skill. The king managed to duck and showed
no displeasure, at least on that day. He even congratulated the man
for his boldness and courage and said that he was a "man" (umugabo).

This scene was enacted more than once during the same reign.
The unfortunate men who served as targets to the spirited monarch,
however, lacked sufficient audacity, and especially good fortune, to
get away... with such amiable words.

[687] Under the reign of the present monarch, Yuhi IV Musinga,
from the time of his accession to the throne and prior to European
penetration, the famous Ndamutsa drum often heralded one or several
executions. Aside from the crime of sorcery it was enough to be de-
nounced, rightly or wrongly, as having spoken poorly of the king and
queen mother. Such crimes were punished on short order and briskly.

Public rumor has it that the young king tried his first gun shot
on a madman. He hit him point blank.

The courtiers who were present at this murder scene emitted
frenzied bravos to applaud the supreme skill of His Majesty.

[177] European influence and supervision alone managed to bring
to an end this state of affairs and this kind of behavior, which in the
natives' way of thought only served to accentuate the majesty and
power of the king. /381/ It does not follow that this change made
the pagan Blacks any happier, for they were awed by the ancient
customs and the bloody displays of brute force.

671 In principle, justice was the king's justice, since as the saying
goes, "the king is the law." For the sake of truthfulness, however,
it must be added that there is a set of laws in existence. It is cer-
tainly not a complete code, but it nevertheless includes a series of
laws and practices adding up to a veritable common law which, had
it been rigorously applied, would have avoided many an extortion
and cruelty. Gradually, over the centuries, a special procedure had
been established for litigations bearing on property rights, inheritance
rights, matrimonial rights and bride price, physical damage such as

784 keeper or owner of a herd, his property would also suffer from this infraction of custom (2). /411/

2. His cows would bear only male calves.

A husband may not use this kitchen utensil to beat his wife! He would risk the loss of his life.

The failure to observe most of the prescribed customs while celebrating a wedding would make the parents of the two partners liable to illness or death.

[551] When asked what their name is, children, young men, and girls either do not answer or give a false name, for fear that the stranger may cast an evil spell upon them and thus prevent them from growing.

[841] A woman in her menses may not enter a hut where there is a newborn child, lest she cause the baby to contract scabies. Hence the custom of placing a copper-thread bracelet (urunyerere, or urwinjiri) about the neck of babies as a talisman and preventive.

[643] The king must never bend his knees, in order not to expose his kingdom to becoming smaller.

A father may not step over the hide that serves as a portable cradle (ingobyi) for his child, nor may a son step over his mother's belt.

A woman may not step over a spear, milk a cow, repair the roof of a hut, imitate (!) the cry of a rooster, etc.

It is forbidden to sit on a food basket.

When it thunders, one may not smoke a pipe when seated on a chair.

No one may rest on a sheepskin, or he will contract scabies (ngo badahumana). There is danger of death involved in carrying a whetting stone (itya20) into someone else's house.

[825 777] It is expressly forbidden to kill certain birds and certain reptiles, not only because they are totem but also because they are regarded either as good luck for the land, like the wagtail (inyamanza), or as bad luck, like the scaly anteater, whose dead body might draw great misfortunes upon the territory. /412/

784 A traveler who stubs his left foot against an obstacle or who
 [484] meets with a rat whose pelt is slightly mottled (umushushwe) must
 return home, lest misfortune come to him.

If one finds black ants (intozi) on one's path, he must draw his
 hand over his foot as though to remove them, lest they swarm into
 his hut.

[843] A pregnant woman must not see a European nor hear the sound
 of a gunshot, else the child she bears will suffer (1).

[751] 1. In order to neutralize this
 influence, she need only procure
 a cartridge case, a piece of paper,
 or even a piece of tile, brick, or
 any other object of European origin,
 and wear it around her neck as an
 amulet or talisman. The child will
 be born safe from injury.

[842] A woman who has borne only sons may not nurse the daughter
 of another woman, lest she bear nothing but girls from now on.

A man may not meet with his betrothed or with his mother-
 in-law prior to marriage (2). The king was formerly forbidden to see

[643] 2. Cf. "Cérémonies du mariage
 /Marriage Ceremonies/, " by
 Fr. Pagès (Anthropos, 1925).

his sons, at least in theory; for it has been proved that the last monarchs
 often broke this rule.

If the manufacturer of banana wine insults someone while
 crushing the fruit, he runs the risk of contracting the scurfy disease
 (guhumana).

A woman must keep silent while kneading sorghum dough.
 If a dog or chicken dirties the floor of the hut, she is forbidden to
 leave her work and clean the spot, or the bread may shrink.

If the bottom bananas in a bunch ripen first, the owner of the
 grove worries because it means that a danger threatens him. /413/

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drawn to the beauty of the fair stranger. The king was notified. She was the girl he had been waiting for. As a reward, the wagtail was granted a permanent privilege to its species called ubulenga nzira, which included immunity and a sort of tithe to be levied upon the crops throughout the realm.

near the hill of Lwoga, not far from Nyanza, the present capital.

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The Bagessera regard themselves as the most important Muhutu /Bahutu/ clan, and claim to be the most ancient inhabitants of Ruanda. According to them, they were the first masters of the land. /462/

Bloody Bondage Imposed on Some Families

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The Bakono, Banyabyinshi, and Bakunzi of the Kinyaga were for a long time the victims of this /type of bondage/.

Let us add, however, that the brutality and cruelty characteristic of those inhuman and now suppressed customs had lost some of their primitive harshness in the course of the last two reigns.

1. The expiatory debt to which the Bakono were bound for having fought Ruganzu II had been changed altogether.

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Upon the accession of a new king to the throne, the Bakono had to send one or two of their people to the capital, and so did another clan which had formerly belonged to the Banyabyinshi group, so often mentioned at the beginning of the great king's reign.

At court, instead of having their throats slit as was formerly done, those people were merely sprinkled with lustral water (chalk water) and driven for an instant into the hut of the spirits as though being offered in sacrifice to them. There the matter rested. Other chroniclers state that it was customary to beat them a few times with

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sticks so that the custom should not altogether lose its penal character.

2. Another improvement over the past has been the complete suppression during the two preceding reigns of the odious custom which prompted each new prince when he ascended the throne to send his troops into the Russokovu, between the Bugamba and Kingogo, to make war and receive their baptism of fire.

This was called "to make the king's spear drink blood" (guhiri' icchumu ry' umwami).

Just as the Banyarwanda have the habit of leading their herds to the watering hole (guhiri' inka) at the /463/ beginning of the day, a traditional custom also made it necessary for the king to make his spear drink blood (kunywesh' amarasso icchumu ry' umwami) upon his accession to the throne.

After killing some unfortunate people, the victorious warriors returned home.

The beginning of a reign could not be augured more auspiciously.

773 Ruganzu II Ndori was the first to launch such an expedition, which later became traditional.

He did this to punish the killers of his father. According to one version, which has already been cited (1), old King Ndahiro was

1. Cf. Book III, Histoire du règne de Ruganzu II, /History of Ruganzu II's Reign/ /not translated/.

killed at Russokovo, by the Bakongoro (a segment of the great Banyabyinshi faction) who had rebelled against him and whom he had set out to subjugate.

[103] The expedition ended in disaster. Ndahiro, so the tradition adds, died there along with many of his followers. The rebels seized the king's drums and had them burned. Only the Kalinga, or palladium of the realm, escaped the conquerors. This is why the place where the defeat took place has been known since by the name

773 of Rubi rw'inyundo, meaning "the evil of the hammer," to recall that
[103] the weapons wrought by the blacksmiths' hammers were fatal there to
Ndahiro and his warriors (2).

2. There are numerous variations on this historical theme. The inhabitants of the Bugamba insist that Ruganzu II was smoked out of Kirengo Cave by the Banyabyinshi. Hence the custom, they say, of leading two of the inhabitants of the land to the capital, where they were beaten, in memory of and punishment for this misdeed. Others believe that it was Chyilima-Rugwe who was fatally injured by the Bakongoro and who, pursued by his enemies, came to die near Gasseke, where his skeleton was later found. These tragic circumstances would explain the 15 annual days of mourning in June, if the disaster was such as the chroniclers lead us to suppose.

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643 3. Fortunate, too, is the abolition of the custom which prompted
the young king to kill one of his maternal uncles (nyirarume) with his own hands, an act which was political as well as /464/ superstitious, and which often followed close on the murder of the princes who were the monarch's relatives by marriage.

The prosperity of the realm was believed to depend on the fulfillment of cruel customs.

The abolition of these barbarous practices would be wholly to the credit of the Banyarwanda were it not for the fact that in 1895, at the time when Mibambge-Rutalindwa was deposed, the victorious Bega faction then in power committed innumerable atrocities toward

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the vanquished that the natives sometimes relate to each other secretly and fearfully in the evening by the fire.

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4. The best known of those customs is the punishment of the Bachuku and Bayumbo, who are from Bukunzi land, linked to the Kinyaga province.

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The story of the misdeed which gave rise to this penalty is told in Histoire du Règne de Ruganzu II /The History of the Reign of Ruganzu II/ /Book III, not translated/.

Because the bull in one of the great king's herds had been killed, the king himself proceeded to take a blazing revenge there and then by having two young men and two young women killed in the valley called Nyakafunzo.

"My spear," cried the angered monarch, "I shall henceforth leave it among you so that you may give it children. At every change of reign, you shall surrender a young man and a young woman to expiate your misdeed." The royal envoys, therefore, would appear whenever a new king succeeded to the throne and claim their human tribute.

The young man was killed on the spot at Nyakafunzo. A dagger was plunged into his armpit. The blood was gathered into a wooden jar which was then taken into enemy country in accordance with directives from the capital.

The shedding of this cursed blood guaranteed the defeat of those inhabitants who had offended the king /465/ or who were at war with him. The corpse of the unfortunate one was left on the spot, where the hyenas soon disposed of it. . . . As for the young woman who had to be supplied by the Bachuku, it was agreed that she should be chosen among mothers who were suckling a baby girl. Her lot was less fearsome. She was given in marriage to the Bumbogo, where she had to attend to the cultivation of sorghum and eleusine, whose "first fruits" were taken to court for the great annual festival celebrated there at that time. As a further contribution to this custom, the Bachuku also supplied the flour mill used to grind the sorghum and eleusine.

An earthen jug and the large household spoon, or spatula, (umwuko), used to make bread (umutsima) were sent along with the millstones.

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●643 782 The Blacks insist that the custom was not followed when the present king ascended the throne in 1896. The bloody events which took place at that time caused it to be overlooked.

It is not certain either that the Bakunzi, or people from Bukunzi, lent themselves to this custom willingly, considering its odiousness and the independence they were beginning to show in their dealings with the Hamitic king.

Privileges and Favors at Court

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644 In the course of this work, there has been frequent mention of exemptions, franchises, and immunities granted to individuals or families. The reader is advised to look into Fondation du Royaume hamite /Founding of the Hamitic Kingdom/ and Histoire du Règne de Ruganzu II (History of the Reign of Ruganzu II) /Books II and III, not translated/, in order to familiarize himself with the subject.

He will find there the approximate time when those rights were granted and the reasons for their existence, and he will be surprised to encounter instances of regional autonomy.

We shall speak here only of certain favors or /466/ privileges of a special character, granted for a specific period of time or even permanently.

Elevation to noble rank falls into the second of these categories.

1. Elevation to Noble Rank

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644 The Batwa, as we said earlier, are a caste despised by the Bahutu as well as by the Batutsi.

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565 It is regarded as a dishonor not only to contract matrimonial unions with them, but also in making them commensal. There have been exceptions to this type of ostracism, however. In-reviewing the past, one finds some Batwa who were raised to noble rank and placed on the same level as the Batutsi.

Others gained practical nobility in the course of time.

The best-known example is that of the Mutwa /singular of Batwa/ Busiete, to whom Yuhi III Gahindiro gave his own daughter Mulangamirwa in marriage as a reward for his devotion and services.

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686 Sentashonga, the victim's cousin, was granted permission that evening to have the corpse of his relative buried.

[52] The elders and former habitués of the court do not lack for narratives of this kind, which they relate like any other tale without seeming overly shocked by them. Such is the environment, such are the mores and attitudes. /485/

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664 "The king is the master," they say. "He does as he pleases. The decisions he makes cannot be contested. He is the supreme judge. One can only obey and assent." The victims' relatives were sometimes the first to come and greet him, feigning total impassiveness, forced as they were to drive back to the bottom of their hearts the bitter pain which they could not but feel.

Complaints, wails, and recriminations could only have stirred up the anger of the king and given rise to new slaughters.

While looking after his own safety, every person also had to keep in mind that of his people /relatives and friends/: The latter, indeed, might be held responsible for the deeds and actions, no matter how harmless, of any of their fellow members. The extermination of a whole family formerly weighed very little on the scale of royal justice.

[687] So as not to provoke trouble which might prove fatal, therefore, they put a good face on misfortune. These execrated, however innocent they might have been, were claimed in loud voices to have been cursed men (ibichibga) or rebels. To shed tears or express one's sorrow were crimes of high treason. "A mere whim of the master was sufficient to send a person to punishment. What won't one do to avoid so cruel a fate?" This statement made by a court favorite of the previous reign /avant-règne/ reveals a great deal about the mores of the time. "If the king happened to sprain his foot," added the same man, "to knock against some obstacle or pebble, it was not a good idea to meet with him at that moment."

In his anger the monarch might accuse anyone of having bewitched him, and wreak then and there a signal vengeance.

[696] Professional executioners were not always used for this purpose. The king might call upon any member of his retinue to carry out the task. The person had to comply, no matter how revolted he might

643 be /486/ by this dreadful assignment. Hands unpracticed in dealing
644 death might sometimes fumble, but the master was watching and
646 the task had to be carried through. The fact of being a friend of the
victim did not exempt anyone from this odious task.

As a rule and with some rare exceptions, it may be said that the subjects were not inordinately appalled by such assignments, so much was this an accepted custom of the times.

186 This did not prevent the Banyarwanda from regarding themselves as superior to other Blacks, whom they thought to surpass in intelligence and civilization. Despite the stains and stigmas of the past, they reject with irritation the term Shenzi, which is applied exclusively to noncivilized groups, as not applying in any way to them or to their ancestors. It is good to close the tale of these cruel practices and to feel that the curtain of time has been drawn forever over the past.

III. Poisoning and Bewitching: The Use of Charms and Philters

754 What should we really believe about those victims whose death is attributed to bewitchment or poisoning? The Blacks unquestionably mention this constantly. Their credulity in this connection is universal and extraordinary.

Numerous examples are cited of deaths which are said to have resulted from one or the other of those alleged causes.

We may add that the natives are familiar with numerous methods for bewitching their enemies, and that sorcerers in this evil category, both male and female, are found in great numbers throughout the country. One thing is certain: their superlative reputation is worse than their deeds.

As for crimes of poisoning, one may rest assured that such attempts were made and that toxic materials were used to this end, some of which were extracted locally and others purchased in neighboring regions such as /487/ the Uswi and Bunyabungu. How effective were those poisons? This is not easy to determine since, on the one hand, a true case of poisoning has never actually been witnessed, although the Blacks are absolutely convinced that they do occur

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home, on the advice of his familiars, in a hut that stood nearby. The sorcerers assured him that he had nothing more to fear on the part of the spirits, who had been given full satisfaction by means of this trick.

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Upon the accession of each new king to the throne, a special envoy went to the Ruzizi Valley and drew water from a spring called Zina. He took some of that water and brought it for the young monarch to drink.

The reasons for this custom, which has now fallen into disuse, have been forgotten.

Chapter 6

I. The Two Great Festivals at Court

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The two most important celebrations (ibirori) take place at the official presentation of the "First Fruits," and on the day following the annual mourning period, which the king and his court must observe.

This latter feast, which closes the month of June, is celebrated with the same pomp and richness. Since it will be described in the chapter dealing with honors rendered to the spirits of the royal dead, we shall discuss here only the festival called "First-Fruits" festival.

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In their enthusiasm and admiration for Ruganzu II, the Victorious, the Banyarwanda go so far as to credit him with almost every food plant or grain they possess. Special mention is made of sorghum, eleusine, and a kind of wild plant /499/ known by the name of issogi (1), owing to their importance in the local economy.

766 including numerous regulations that seem to date from far back in the past. It appears that the Batutsi monarchs borrowed from the ancient autochthonous princes (abahinza) the majority of their funeral rites, and more especially mummification, or "smoking," since this is what it actually amounts to, as well as the choice of the resting place and the jealous care with which the royal cemeteries are guarded (2).

2. The royal cemeteries where the aboriginal Bahutu petty kings were buried are still to be found in many provinces of Ruanda and especially in the Kingogo. The Hamites borrowed other things from the vanquished and subjected autochthonous inhabitants. We have already seen that the drums at the capital recall the memory of the tiny principalities subjected by the Hamites and that they are regarded as trophies of victory and as guarantees for the preservation of the present kingdom. Those same instruments have retained their role and their importance among the Batutsi.

[767] There follows a brief description of these matters as given by laymen, since the appointed royal undertakers (abanyamugogo) maintain the strictest silence on the subject. /515/

I. How a King Dies, According to Popular Belief

● 643 In Ruanda a monarch is such a superior and respected being that in the mind of most Bahutu he could not possibly be born, live, and die like the common run of men.

643 Hence the following beliefs, to which the common people have given credence up to now.

644 In principle, in the old days the sovereign was not permitted
855 to see his heir. The child was entrusted to the care of reliable men and raised far from his father, who occasionally was brought pieces of string which had served to measure the height and waist of his future successor. In order to judge the development and strength of the young prince, the king imprinted the outline of his own foot in a basket of sorghum flour. This was brought to the crown prince, who in turn left in it the imprint of his foot. The basket was returned to the king, who never lost interest in the physical development of his child.

Bows were later sent to him so that he might try his strength. The heir was considered worthy of the throne on the day when he was able to string his father's bow, since now he had become as strong as his father.

643 The last verifications were made. It was necessary to make
762 sure that the king's garment fitted him perfectly, and that the imprint of his feet matched exactly that of his father's. The latter, on the other hand, having grown old and noticed that his beard and hair were greying, (yamez' imvi), decided himself that his time had come. He immediately called his confidants and made known his last wishes. "I am going to depart (gutabara); there are only a few moments left to me. You shall see to it that my son rules (kwimika) in my place. You shall obey him in all things". . . .

[278] The same evening the appointed sorcerers presented him /516/ with hydromel (inkangaza) in which they had mixed a violent poison, purchased, it is believed, on the shores of Lake Victoria, where it was prepared with putrefied crocodile flesh.

The king went to sleep and never awakened. "He has drunk" (yanyone), as they said in official terminology, or else "He has departed" (yatabaye), he has rejoined his ancestors, the Liberators, who saved the land, "He has ceded the throne" (yatanze). "The sky has fallen" (ijuru ryaguye), for such are the expressions still consecrated by usage and used to proclaim this serious event.

643 There must have been few kings who benevolently left this life of their own accord.

Popular belief has accepted too many fables on the subject. It was still said recently that Queen Mother Nyiramavugo, a grandmother of King Lwabugiri who must have died around 1860, was the first to refuse the poison when old age drew near in spite of the dictates of custom and tradition. "Since that day," say the common people, "the Abiru, or keepers of the customs, who are in charge of this task and duty have not dared mention it anymore to kings and queens."

2. The Corpse of the Royal Dead is "Smoked"

766 "When a king died," the same people go on, "two Batutsi from important families were seized and killed forthwith near the body."

643 This was called "to make the king's pillow" (gusegurir' umwami). Those men were given to him to accompany and serve him in the spirit world.

[641] A subject counts for nothing while the king is all important. It is proper, therefore, to send him at least two men chosen from the highest social stratum.

"They did not dare observe this rite," add the narrators, "at the death of the last king, Lwabugiri (in 1895)." /517/

When a queen mother died, two great ladies of the same (Mututsi) /Batutsi/ race were sacrificed. It is the Banyamugogo, or [767] "men with the big (mourning) log," who are in charge of funeral ceremonies. They make up the royal corporation of undertakers, although their name does not indicate this outright. They are called "men with the big (mourning) log," owing to the custom which demands that a wooden log be burned for three or four days after the death of an individual. For this purpose, one deliberately chooses [824] a green log of red-bloom erythrina (umuko), a symbolic tree that recalls the death of Ryangombe, the alleged founder of the famous secret society of initiates (imandwa).

[823] The body of the dead king is transported from his last home, which will henceforth be called Gisozi ("Big hill") (1), to one of the

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1. This expression "big hill" is readily understood by the natives, because it serves to designate the spot where a reigning monarch drew his last breath.

sacred groves (2) reserved for royal tombs by custom or tradition.

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2. We owe the reader an explanation of the expression "sacred grove," which will recur frequently. The word "sacred" is taken here in a broad and technical sense to mean that these groves are set aside and closed to laymen, who may not enter them. They are guarded by official watchmen, who see to it that the grounds are properly respected.

The Banyamugogo, who become the temporary masters of the area, have a large hut built and enlist for its construction the services of neighboring people.

There the remains of the sovereign are sheltered and laid upon a grid in the middle of the hut, about 1.50 meters above ground. The members of the corporation keep a fire burning under the grid for several days in order to dry out the corpse and prevent it from putrefying.

The body, which lies on a bed of skins, is constantly moved so that the heat from the fire may reach all its parts. /518/

The keepers of the hut take turns without interruption, day and night, by the fire they must maintain. Meanwhile, no layman may come near the place under penalty of death.

The undertakers keep up their work until, according to popular belief, the corpse gives birth to a leopard, which is at first

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766 only a small worm (1). Then a pit is dug in the same hut. The royal

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1. Permit us to repeat once more that we are putting ourselves in the position of the natives. We are merely repeating their tales and beliefs.

remains are laid at the bottom of the tomb on a new bed of grass covered with precious skins: lion, leopard, and antelope hides.

The body is completely isolated from the ground, which must not soil it. The whole thing is covered with special mats (ibirago by ibisunyu) made of lake reeds. Finally, the pit is filled up (2).

2. When a king named Yuhi ascends the throne, according to another popular belief, the undertakers have to perform another duty toward the deceased king in addition to what has already been said on the subject.

After having been smoked, the completely desiccated body (umwite) is carried to the sacred grove of Muhima, below Kigali. The pall bearers dig at the spot called Nyamvura ("the rain spot"), where there formerly existed an equally sacred spring, and lay the body in the hole for a moment.

This is called "giving the king a drink (guhira)."

Then the body is brought back to the royal cemetery. His

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successor may henceforth rule in peace, and abundance will reign in the realm, for the various formalities on which the prosperity of the land depends have been carried out.

3. Popular Beliefs Concerning the Survival of the King

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825 "The undertakers," the narrator goes on to say, "cannot leave the site of the grave yet.

"They are not permitted to leave it until the end of the mourning period, which lasts at least four months. The above-mentioned worm /519/ 'must' come out of the corpse's right hand after a while. It is immediately picked up by the keepers, who put it in a vessel full of milk.

"When the container becomes too small, the animal is put in a large jar into which milk is poured every day. The worm soon 'sprouts legs'; it will soon change shape. The jar is no longer adequate, and a tub (umuvule) is provided and also filled with milk. The thing becomes a leopard. It is still fed milk until the day when its carnivorous instincts awaken and it begins to use its claws. Then it is given fresh meat. It must be tied, for it has become 'mean' (irakaliha). The animal manages to break its first bonds, woven of banana-tree bark. It is tied with new ficus ropes, which are soon broken in turn.

"In order to chain the beast, a piece of wire (umukwege) is brought from the royal court (ibgami), where messengers keep going incessantly to report on the whole affair.

"The day comes when the wild beast wounds one of its keepers. Another one soon meets with the same fate, and a third dies of his wounds.

"The situation has become intolerable and cannot go on.

"The leopard, anxious to gain its freedom, grows fierce. Finally, permission is given to grant it freedom, thus releasing the Banyamugogo from an impossible task.

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825 "A sensible man," the narrator added as he closed his tale, "cannot believe in such things. As for myself, I am only repeating what I have heard around me."

The "sacred groves" often serve as lairs for leopards, who take advantage of the rainy season, when the sorghum has grown tall, to comb the countryside /520/ for prey. Furthermore, the leopard is the totem of the king, who formerly appropriated all leopardskins for his own personal use. Many common people, therefore, believe in these fables. In the capital, where no one is taken in by such childish tales, nothing is done to enlighten the people. The undertakers, who maintain the strictest silence about their own functions, stand only to gain by exaggerating the wondrous aspects of the matter in order to acquire increased importance in the eyes of their fellow men. One can imagine the prestige that surrounds the king, a prestige that is mixed in with a large amount of superstition and that causes him to be revered on a par with a demigod by most of his subjects.

4. Duties and Privileges of the Undertakers

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767 The task of burying or, more accurately, mummifying (gwosa, gwosereza) the sovereign is entrusted as we said to a special corporation known by the name of Banyamugogo, that is to say, "the men with the big (mourning) log," who belong to the Abiru clan. This is the special clan whose members are responsible for preserving the memory of customs and traditions. The royal undertakers have no duties other than the funerary ones and enjoy rare privileges. No chief may attack or pillage them, for they live under the king's protection.

They are not subjected to forced labor, nor do they pay taxes. On the other hand, they are strictly forbidden to come to court and to appear in the presence of the prince. If they have to plead a case before him, they may at best set out on the path to the capital, but they must stop at a good distance from it. There they build a large fire into which they toss fresh cow dung in order to create thick clouds of smoke /521/ and to draw attention upon themselves. Meanwhile they delegate men to present their complaints and grievances.

- 643 Then the king appoints one or two chiefs to go and settle their
767 difficulties.

In the old days these undertakers could not visit with their fellow men, nor could they eat or drink with them. Even today, when [415] invited to feast with their neighbors, they must bring with them their own drinking tube. It is maintained that they do not eat with their children. If it came to pass that the latter, in turn, should bury a new king, they would have to leave their parents and never see them again.

198 A special vocabulary is used to speak of the monarch and
644 certain of his acts. It would be most disrespectful to say that the king sleeps, drinks, eats, etc., like anyone else. We have already seen how his ailments and his death are mentioned (yaberamye, yanyoye, yatabaye, etc.).

767 It is for the same reason that the royal undertakers bear a name
644 that recalls their function only in a very indirect way. Just as they
643 are strictly forbidden to go to the capital, custom forbids the king to go through areas inhabited by members of this corporation or to camp there. He must avoid the sacred groves where the spirits of his ancestors rest, as though the idea of death could shorten the life of the sovereign. It is mandatory to his followers to avert that image and thought from his eyes and from his ears, which are those of a demigod well above common mortals.

He must be enabled to enjoy this life and all its pleasures in *peace*.

5. Mourning Rites Observed at the Death of a Prince

643 The king is mourned for four months, that is to say, until the
765 official accession of his successor to the throne. During /522/ that period of time, cohabitation between spouses is theoretically forbidden. Bulls are also separated from the herds at the time of this terrible misfortune, which causes the Banyarwanda to state that "the sky has fallen" (ijuru ryaguye). Men and even children shave their heads [302] as a sign of mourning.

643 All work in the fields is strictly forbidden. The chiefs were
765 in charge of this, and in order to show their zeal they would not have
hesitated to kill on the spot any wretch who would have gone so far
as to violate custom. If the fields were already plowed, one might
[689] at best sow the seeds or plant the seedlings, but the hoe could not be
used.

[731] A stick had to be used to dig up sweet potatoes from the
ground. It is not overly surprising to hear that sometimes, in the
past, famine resulted from this forced period of cessation of work.

II. Royal Tombs and Sacred Groves (Cemeteries and Former Capitals)

1. Origin and Constitution of the Sacred Groves

766 After the death of a king, as we have said, his body is taken
778 into one of the sacred groves where a large hut is built to shelter the
remains and to mummify them by desiccated prior to burial.

A courtyard is also built, enclosed with ficus branches which
soon take root and which later give rise to a new thicket. Once the
job of smoking is completed, the keepers of the hut bury what is
left of the body inside the dwelling.

They remain there for some time afterward to prevent any
desecration which they believe might still be committed. When
the four months of mourning are over, the house is abandoned and
the door is carefully barricaded on the outside.

The hut will stand for three, four, or even five years, /523/
and will eventually fall to pieces with age without anyone worrying
about it. Before they leave, the royal undertakers plant inside the
courtyard a branch of erythrina (umwuko) in honor of Ryangombe,
[824] the alleged founder of the secret society of initiates (imandwa),
and a ficus (umuvumu) branch to recall the majesty of kingship
(ngo n' umwami) by the height of its trunk and the span of its
branches and leaves. The funeral grove is henceforth created or,
if it already existed, a further unit is added, which in time will be
one with the others.

778 and common terms ikibira, "cemetery," imva or "igituro, "grave,"
766 to be used in this connection. In certain parts of Ruanda, owing to
644 the respect with which the king is regarded and to the reverential fear
he inspires, the Blacks use another expression which is much more
accurate. One frequently hears them speak of musezero (misezero in
the plural), that is to say, the place where the monarch permanently
"took leave" of his subjects, from the verb gusezera, which means
"to take leave."

The word umusezero is now commonly used to mean "restricted
place," "guarded place," because in summer when people set fire to
the tall grass, they first clear the bush from the edges of the
cemeteries to protect the royal graves from fire. /525/

2. Main Royal Cemeteries

766 It is at Gasseke in the Nduga, about four hours from the
Kabgayi mission in the northeast, that one of the first "sepulchral"
groves is found where a prince by the name of Chyilima was buried.

173 Two monarchs by this name are known. It was during the
reign of the more recent of the two that the famous migration into
643 Ruanda of the "Mutes," or "Foreign men with an incomprehensible
766 language," took place. According to tradition, the one with whom
778 we are dealing here was the brother and immediate successor of
Ruganzu I, surnamed Bwimba (1), who lived long before his illustrious

1. The natives relate that the
mother of this Ruganzu late in
life married one of her courtiers
named Chenge, and Chyilima-
Rugwe was born of this union.
She did this to the great dissatisfaction
of her eldest son, Ruganzu I, for
it ran contrary to the custom which
requires the queen mother to live
solely with the reigning prince.

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The same legend adds that Ruganzu-Bwimba, considering himself dishonored, took advantage of a war in Urundi to throw himself into the midst of his enemies, and there met his death.

namesake.

To distinguish him from the other Chyilima, posterity gave the one buried at Gasseke the surname of Rugwe, which means "leopard," [175] because the leopard into whose body he is said to have transmigrated after his death is still believed to inhabit the dense thicket which has grown around his tomb. This is why sacrifices are offered there almost constantly, and the appointed keeper of the place often beats a drum there. Some say that King Chyilima ruled only for a few months, others that he reigned but a few days. Hence the incessant honors meant to ingratiate his spirit... and his voracious alter ego.

Some add that people behave in this manner toward him owing to his unfortunate death, in order to appease his anger and grief (agahinda gashire).

He was driven back from the west where he had been waging war, and his enemies pursued him all the way to Gasseke. /526/

Mortally wounded by one of their spears, he managed to hide in the bushes where he soon died of his wounds, forsaken by his own people. Several months went by without anyone hearing about him.

One fine day some herdsmen discovered his body (umurangara), which was completely dried up. They announced the news at the capital and claimed a reward.

[233] They were encouraged to express their wishes and obtained the privilege of letting their herds graze with impunity on other people's crops in the summertime, when grass is lacking. Whatever the origin of this strange favor may be, it is a fact that until the European penetration the Batutsi and their cowherds did not hesitate to use it and abuse it, at the expense of the unfortunate Bahutu who could do nothing about it...

173 As for the royal cemetery of Luhanga, which lies atop the
● 643 plateau of the same name, the inhabitants of the area all concur in
766 the belief that if King Gihanga himself was not buried there, that is
778 to say, the eminent "Creator," then at least his wife Nyirakabogo was.
It is probable that numerous other monarchs sleep their last sleep
there by the queen's side, but the people are not quite sure of their
names anymore.

Nor are they sure of the names of those who were buried on the
neighboring Kayenzi-Bussigi plateau, where four of those cemeteries
are to be found.

The names of the princes buried in the northernmost cemetery
are better known. The inhabitants of the area are almost unanimous
in naming Kigeri-Mibambge and Nyiramavugo as being buried there.
During the last European war, which had local repercussions, the
natives were rightly frightened and erected huts (indaro) over their
tombs where they offered numerous sacrifices. As for Queen
Nyiramavugo, the elders recall seeing her corpse go by in their
earliest childhood. /527/ The body was laid at the foot of the plateau
for the night before being carried to the top where it was buried.
This was the mother of Lwogera-Mutara, that is to say, the grand-
mother of the present king.

Malembo, daughter of Nyamajinya and mother of Yuhi-
Mazimpaka, was buried on one or the other of the two plateaus, it is
not known exactly which. One still hears of Yuhi-Mazimpaka him-
self and of a sister of Ruganzu, Nyirangabo, who, according to the
natives, were buried in the afore-mentioned cemeteries. What is
certain is that the grove which follows upon the first one starting from
the north holds the remains of Kilongoro, daughter of a certain
Magoma and mother of Chyilima-Ludjugira, who succeeded Yuhi-
Mazimpaka.

According to present-day opinion, the sacred groves of
Luhanga and Kayenzi-Bussigi are reserved exclusively for the burial
of queen mothers (abanyambuto, "those of the grains"), that is to say,
[562] those who provided the heir to the throne and who reigned along
with him.

173 The best known of the royal cemeteries is that of Rutare in
643 the mountainous Buyaga area, not far from Lake Mohazi near the
766 frontier of Ruanda.

778 The existence of this resting place is traced back, rightly or
wrongly, to Ruganzu II, who is said to have been the first one to be
buried there.

According to one tradition, he had himself chosen the site of
his tomb on this high spot, so as to be an insuperable obstacle to the
enemies of Ruanda even after his death. This tradition is seriously
challenged by the inhabitants of the central province of Nduga (1).

1. Cf. Book III, The Reign
of Ruganzu II.

The last two kings who were buried there and who are recalled most
readily were Lwogera and Lwabugiri, the immediate predecessors of
the present reigning monarch.

It is rather difficult to say for how many monarchs the
sepulchral grove of Rutare has served as last resting place. /528/
The trees in the thickets, some of which are quite old, were formerly
separate but eventually merged. Here and there, old trunks which
marked the site of the courtyards in which the huts were built have
disappeared, so that one cannot count the funerary enclosures with
any exactitude. There do not seem to be more than eight or ten.

Three other royal cemeteries are found at Musenyi in the
Nduga to the south of the Kabgayi mission, about two hours away.
The first one stands on the slope of a hill called by the name of
Mayebe. It is made up of a small wood of thorny acacia trees which
have reached their maximum height and whose long intertwined
branches lend a mysterious atmosphere to the grove, where a half
light barely penetrates. Some other trees with thicker foliage
dominate the grove. Those are the inganzamarombo (1).

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1. They are called thus from
kuganza, "to overtop," and
marombo, "swarms of bees,"
because the natives like to set
their hives there.

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A native village stands nearby, its banana groves bordering on the thickets. Its occupants are in charge of watching over the cemetery, which according to the opinion of the Banya-Nduga (inhabitants of the Nduga province) includes the tomb of Ruganzu II Ndori. Those who claim that his body was buried at Rutare cling to their opinion and insist that he was merely "smoked" at Mayebe. The inhabitants of the latter area, on the other hand, claim in turn that after having been mummified he was indeed buried right there, and add that this is the usual procedure. The place is quite commonly known by the name of "Ruganzu's cemetery."

According to the same interpretation, this prince alone was buried there.

Not far from Mayebe, two other small groves made up chiefly of ficus trees stand barely 300 meters apart. /529/ According to some, the corpses of several queens by the name of Nyirakigeri and Nyirayuhi were mummified there. Local people insist that they were also buried there, and support their claim by adding that the place where a king or queen is smoked is also the place where they are buried. The two clumps of trees formerly made up a single sacred grove, and this is why the natives call them by the same name.

The last of those cemeteries stands two kilometers farther. It is made up of handsome ficus trees, but the same controversies arise concerning the use to which this funeral site was put. It is called "the cemetery of the queens who bore the name of Nyiramavugo."

[123] It is not easy to give precise information on this subject. The keepers of the groves, the undertakers (abanyamigogo), and the official chroniclers (Abachur' ubgence) are not willing to surrender all their information on the subject. The statements of other people are unreliable.

Funerary enclosures called ilaro (amalaro in the plural), or "night stopping places," are also found in the area.

They mark the sites of huts which served as shelters for the mortal remains of kings and queens in transit to the cemeteries.

The dwellings had to be abandoned after their visit, just as happens when a prince travelling through his realm stops for the night.

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The term gisozi ("big hill") serves, as we have said, to designate the place where a king died.

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It is the augmentative of the word musozi, which means "hill" and by extension "village." This term belongs to the /word/ class prefixed by the consonant ki.

This class includes nothing but words conveying the idea of majesty, fear, etc. /530/

There are numerous groves in this category, such as those of Kigali, Musumba, Kaganza, etc.

In order to prove the truth of any pronouncement or assertion, the natives use the following phrase which alludes in metaphorical terms to the death of one or another of their sovereigns, Mb' ali jye wakuye

[539]

Lwogera i Kaganza!

"Let it be I ('if I do not speak the truth' being implied here) who tore (King) Lwogera away from Kaganza (name of the place where the king died)!"

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The reader must have noted that kings and queen mothers alone have been mentioned in the preceding pages. Mere wives were entitled to no special honors after their death. They were buried like common mortals. Queen mothers, that is to say, those who bore the heir to the throne and then reigned with him, were granted the same funerary honors as sovereigns.

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Aside from the groves we have just described, there is also mention of one at Bugarama-Ntare (i Buhurura) not far from Rukoma. It is believed to be the spot where the undertakers fulfilled their usual functions at the death of a queen named Nyirakigeri. The sacred grove of Butare, which now only includes a few very old trees, is thought to be the place where Nyagihaga, daughter of Ruyenzi and mother of a Chyilima or Mutara died (1).

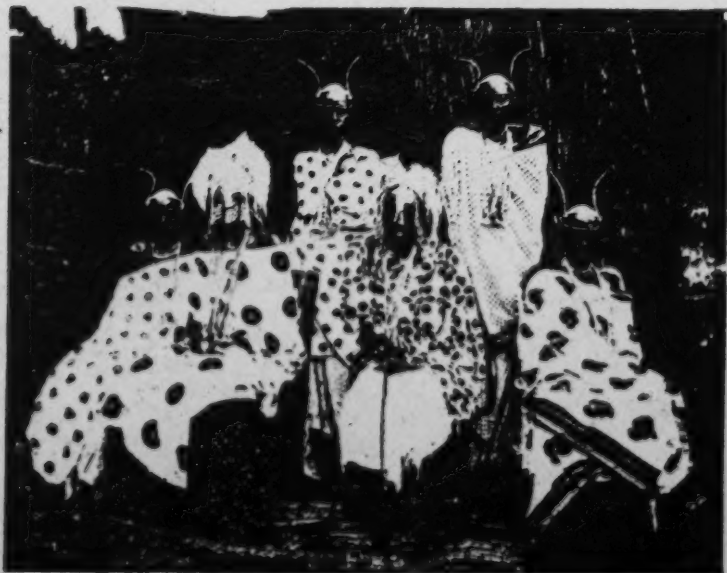
1. The official chroniclers do provide a genealogical list of the kings of Ruanda, with the name of their mothers and of the clans to which the latter belonged, but this cannot be fully credited. We have

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King Musinga in front of the large hut which serves as his reception hall. At his right is his maternal uncle Kabale, instigator of the Ruchunchu coup d'etat.

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King Musinga with his mother at his right and several great court ladies.

5: Pages--266 M-5 (ca. 1925) 1933 FO42 Rundi FO42

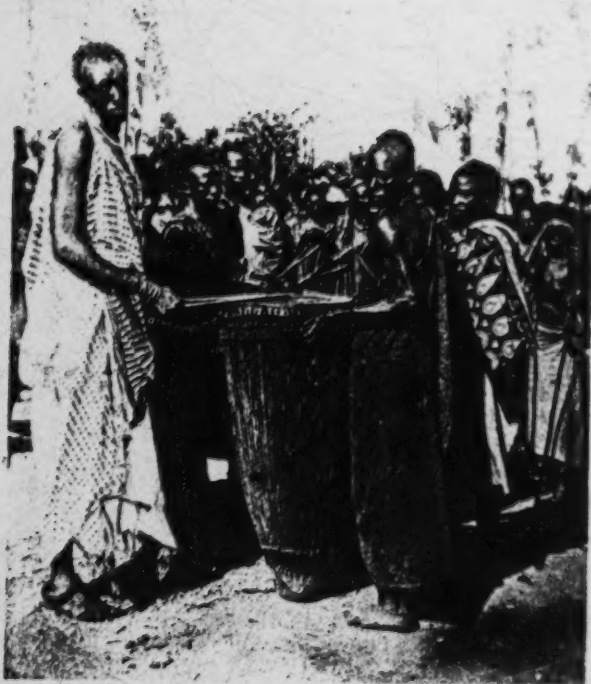
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King Musinga and some people of his entourage.



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The king at one of his favorite diversions.



634 somewhat different. The most important personality after the chief is his brother. He represents him in all matters. Both of them have their houses in the individual villages in which they live during their journeys. The son ranks just below the brother of his father and is granted a village after he has grown up. He is not entitled to gifts in the other villages of his father, and only if he has [267] no uncle does he get an uncle's rank. In spite of this preference, the brother of the chief is not his heir; all his possessions go to the son after the burial of the father.

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563 Below the kissonga are the quite unimportant subchiefs who supervise the communities on the separate hills. Among them there are everywhere, especially in Bugoye, many Bahutu, whereas the higher positions are almost always held by Batutsi. It is only in Mulera and Bgisha that one sees Bahutu also occupying the highest positions.

The Bahutu officials are very much praised by their superiors, for no one can be more merciless and servile than an upstart who is hated by his clansmen. This characterization does not, of course, apply to the clan elders who occupy this position in the free farm communities. The subchiefs are the only cattle-owning Bahutu outside of Mulera, Bgisha, and Bugoye.

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631 There is no doubt that with the extensive interweaving of property belonging to individual high chiefs (in this respect the whole country resembles a village with a community system of planting [Flurzwang]) an influential stratum is created which has vital interests in the most diverse parts of the country. This counteracts the centrifugal, particularistic tendencies of the individual provinces.

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643 These conditions seem to be the result of a conscious aim on the part of the crown. In this direction much seems to have been accomplished by Lwabugiri Kigeri, the father of the present ruler, Musinga. Kigeri is reputed to have centralized the state and partitioned, scattered, and interwoven the holdings of the chiefs in order to destroy the centrifugal tendencies of the feudal lords. This involved him in bitter struggles with the lords, among them his brother-in-law, Kabare, but he managed to crown his efforts with success.

651 the Akanjaru which can be crossed at only a few places because
491 of the swampy condition of its channel, it is their duty to prevent
the natives from leaving Ruanda without the king's consent. It
is obvious that under these conditions the ferry tolls are sometimes
increased very considerably.

651 A further burden affecting the trader is the market tax, indamu.
443 In Nyundo it was very high, 10 to 15 percent of the value of the
article traded. Here Lwakadygi, Gamidji, and Makobi took turns
collecting the tax.

The result of this high tax is that small auxiliary markets
are set up along the paths near the markets. Here transactions
are tax free. The chiefs who collect the indamu also settle dis-
putes that arise in the markets.

651 Ivory from slain elephants and leopard skins are the property
of the king and must be sent to Nyanza. The regulation requiring
leopard skins to be delivered seems to be connected with the be-
lief that after their deaths the members of the family of Ruanda
rulers become leopards.

721 Military Affairs. The king makes all decisions concerning
643 war and peace. He wages war in order to punish rebellious vassals
or to win over vassals of other kings.

701 The troops are made up of ngabo. They are divided into
contingents, the names of which are independent of the names of
the provinces or of the chiefs who happen to be in command.
Lieutenant Von Parisch (1) mentions the Bangogo contingent under

1. Parisch, F. R. Von, "Zwei Reisen"
durch Ruanda 1902 bis 1903 [Two
Journeys through Ruanda 1902 to 1903], "
Globus, Vol. 86 (1904), p. 77.

Ruenankiko (Ruidangigo) and the Lujango contingent under Kabare.

Usually only a few contingents are called out for military
expeditions. This was the case, for example, with the last ex-
pedition against the Mutwa Bassebia in 1906, which ended in
failure.

Generals are appointed separately by the king for each ex-
pedition. Ruhara Aramanzi was the commander-in-chief of the

692 "to Musinga" simply meant the place of his residence. The judge to whom these people were going was Rwamanwa, high chief of Njaruguru.

If the two parties have different chiefs, the trial is conducted at the compound of the more powerful one, since otherwise, because of injured vanity, he could make it impossible to carry out the verdict. If the two chiefs cannot reach an agreement, they go to a third party or to the king, who usually appoints a judge.

693 The king personally handles only the most important affairs of his bagaragu, but even that he does unwillingly.

695 The Trial. Certain forms are observed at trials. The two parties squat on the ground in front of the judge and greet him by clapping their hands. Otherwise only the king is greeted in this way. Then each in turn tells about the matter under dispute.

After the verdict of the judge, the winner immediately rises, takes some grass, and lays it at the feet of the judge in gratitude and as a token of his subservience. He then sings a song of praise in which (in Mulera, for example) he boasts about the number of enemies he has killed.

People sometimes wait in Nyanza two or three months for a trial, and finally the hearing is postponed until the next year. The chiefs do this also. They are afraid of endangering themselves by a sentence of incalculable scope.

696 Executing a sentence is the weak side of primitive justice. There is no organ of the government that would attend to the execution of the decree. Even the decisions of the king are by no means always carried out.

Sometimes, to ensure the execution of the sentence, the guilty party is held prisoner by the winning party until he has fulfilled his obligations.

The sentence is said to be carried out at the place of residence of the two parties. For this purpose the king sends a special messenger. He must inform the population of the decision, in disputes about land he must mark out the sections, and in cases involving cattle, divide up the herds.

Because of the long duration of these cases, which gives all the court schemers an opportunity to fish in troubled waters, the winning party sometimes leaves the capital before the king's

174 Ruanda, which originally covered the district of Bugansa south of Lake Mohasi, was later, in the course of a long period of time, limited to the province of Nduga. It must have been a long time ago, however, since Ruanda outgrew these circumscribed boundaries, for Mukinjaga and Mulera as well have traditions that go back to the rule of Ruganzu, and these provinces certainly did not belong to the original ones. The last Ruganzu is Musinga's fifth ancestor and probably ruled in the first years of the last century. This leads us to assume that the large kingdom of Ruanda is not a newly formed state of the last century, but has a long history.

The legend referring to this is somewhat as follows.

173 Once upon a time Ruganzu came to the Muhawura volcano to hunt elephants. Suddenly the news comes to him that the Barundi have crossed the southern border of his kingdom. He abandons the hunt and goes forth to meet the enemy. On the way he stops on a hill to rest. After a brief interval he continues the journey in his litter (ngobi). After the company had got under way, someone noticed that the king had left his spear on the hill. They shouted back to the hill, asking the people to return the spear that had been left behind. The Balera replied that the king had left them the spear, and if he wanted it back, he should come to get it himself. Whereupon the king answered: "If you had stolen food, I should have believed that you are hungry; if you had stolen cows, I should assume that you want to own them. But to steal a spear, [290] what can it bring you? Let it remain with you, multiply, and strike you dead." That is why there is always fighting in Mulera. The royal curse is upon the land.

In Mukinjaga they say about Ruganzu that he put the bimara tax on the region of Bukunzi as a punishment for the theft of his cows.

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413 Ruganzu Iwa Ndahiro (Ruganzu, son of Ndahiro) is the king about whom there are the most legends in Ruanda. He is said to have had supernatural power, and people believe that he might one day return. When, in the year 1904, the news spread that the imperial resident at Usumbura had been murdered, the natives said that Ruganzu had killed him.

175 Mutara Lwogera was also a successful warrior. He conquered
643 Bugoye and in 1876 added Kissaka to Ruanda by force of arms.

Lwabugiri Kigeri who was visited by Count Von Götzen, the first European to do so, was also a very belligerent ruler. He increased Ruanda's possessions in the Rutshuru Basin as far as Lake Edward.

175 In order to characterize the personality of Lwabugiri some-
643 what more exactly, we must mention that one of his chief delights
661 was stealing cows. If the owner of the cattle resisted, he was punished with confiscation for having the boldness to act against the muami [ruler]. If he did not resist, his cows, which he had learned to conceal, were simply taken away from him. These cow thefts with which Lwabugiri consciously promoted the splitting up of feudal possessions, as well as the constant wars, made him very troublesome to the Batutsi.

175 Without doubt the rule of Lwabugiri was a period of great
643 expansion and glory for Ruanda. The state enjoyed such a high reputation that neither the Arabs nor Stanley and Emin Pasha ventured to enter it. Lwabugiri undertook numerous campaigns, among them an unsuccessful one to Nkole (1891?). He wanted to get King Ntare's cows in order to supplement his own herds which had been very much decimated by disease. He waged war three times with Urundi, twice with Idjwi Island, three times against Bunyabungu, and twice with Kissaka. Moreover, he laid waste the country of Mulera three times in order to punish rebellious subjects, and he pillaged the Gana Mukari (1) three times in his

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1. Brard, A., "Skizzen aus Ruanda
[Ruanda Sketches], " Afrikabote, 1900-
1901, p. 99.

ancestral province because of the revolt which was supposed to have taken place there. He was unsuccessful in his expeditions against Urundi. The two kings, Lwabugiri and Mwezi Kisabo (?), made peace with each other and built their settlements on the border between the two states, on the Akanjaru. The wars with the inhabitants of Idjwi Island were also only temporarily successful.

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643 [291] Dr. Kandt (1) says that Idjwi belongs to the Ruanda

1. Kandt, R., Caput Nili
(Berlin, 1904), pp. 517-518.

sphere of influence. Its inhabitants deny that they were former subjects of Ruanda, as the Banyaruanda maintain. Mihiggo's grandfather, Mwendo, had to pay tribute to Ruanda. His son, Kaweggo, tried to make himself independent, but Lwabugiri fought him (1886) and he had to flee to the island of Ugishushu. He was betrayed by his son, Nkudie, and fell into the hands of Kigeri who had him executed. After the king returned (1888), having been called back by unrest in Ruanda, the independent party formed around Mihiggo, another son, for Nkudie was executed by the king because he had betrayed his father. After a few years (1892 or 1893) Lwabugiri undertook a second expedition against Idjwi. The island was again conquered, and Mihiggo fled to Bunyabungu. In order to punish Bunyabungu for sheltering Mihiggo, Kigeri set out on an expedition against this country, but he became ill and died. With his death, the hour of liberation came for Idjwi, and Mihiggo returned as an independent ruler (1894).

The dying King Lwabugiri was brought back to Ruanda and died en route in Mukinjaga. It is said that he was poisoned by his courtiers who were tired of the endless wars. Not all of them were like the Batwa who were devoted to the king and regarded the wars as the best opportunity to consume a great deal of meat. Some accounts have it that the poison was prepared by his wife, Kanzogera, the mother of Musinga.

Lwabugiri pursued centralistic tendencies in his internal policy. It is said that he was credited with having broken up the large hereditary chieftainships and interspersed them territorially. This was probably the cause of the war with the later regent, Kabare, who allegedly was castrated, as well as the death of Kigeri. According to one version, Kabare was castrated by Lwabugiri in order to make it impossible for this ambitious man to try to become king. Another version has it that the young Kabare was caught with the favorite wife of the king and was punished for this. In revenge

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643 Kabare is said to have killed all of Lwabugiri's sons except Musinga, the son of his sister Kanzogera, after their mighty father died.

These accounts agree with a note by Von Beringe (2) referring to

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2. Beringe, Captain Von, a report on his journeys in the region of the Kirunga volcanoes, Mitteilungen aus den Deutschen Schutzgebieten 1901, p. 39.

Mumusa, the queen of Mururwa in Mpororo: "Mhumse claimed that she was a wife of the deceased Sultan Lwabugiri of Ruanda and that she was sent here by him to escape the persecution of Chief Kawalle who [292] killed four of his sons. However, there is no longer any connection between Mhumse and Ruanda."

Mibambwe who was temporarily proclaimed king after the death of Lwabugiri was burned to death in his hut along with his entire family (1). Most of his brothers died also. Only

1. Kandt, R., Caput Nili (Berlin, 1904), p. 263.

Ishirangabo, however, was not considered for the rulership because he was a man dedicated to the spirit Ryangombe. Bilegea, a son of Lwabugiri, was missing from the time of his youth and was always regarded as a possible, dangerous pretender to the throne. His return to the country was very much feared by the rulers. (2)

Ibid., p. 264.

Musinga, whose father had cast him out, was taken in by a Muhutu and reared by him. It was only because no other son of Lwabugiri came to be considered that the neglected son of Kanzogera was appointed king. He ascended the throne as Juhl Musinga. As a result of his plebeian upbringing, the king had learned to eat goat's meat. This custom is said to have been adopted by the court Batutsi out of courtesy.

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643 This fact would probably have caused the young ruler great difficulties if it had not happened that three years after the death

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648 of Lwabugiri Captain Ramsay came to the country in 1897. Musinga was recognized as the ruler. Captain Ramsay entered into a special pact of blood brotherhood with him or at least with the man that was introduced to him as Musinga. (3) He reports:

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3. Ramsay, Captain, an account of his expeditions to Ruanda and Lake Rikwa, Verhandlungen der Gesellschaft für Erdkunde zu Berlin, Vol. 25 (1898), p. 315.

"Thereupon I had to tie a string around Juhi, and he tied several strings around me; then we shook hands vigorously, and the king of Ruanda and I became blood brothers."

Since that time Musinga has been energetically supported by the government, which, through him, again has the entire country in hand. Musinga has at his disposal the Askari of the guard troops who in an emergency can teach his rebels a lesson. I had occasion to observe this in 1907 in Mulera. With the intervention of this new factor, the country has become orderly to an extent that formerly did not seem possible.

113 Kissaka. The history of Kissaka cannot be traced as far back as that of Ruanda.

Banyakissaka traditions about ancient times say that they, like the Banyoro and Baganda, came from the north, not from the south, like the Wasukuma.

[293] Kissaka has been a state since very ancient times. According to Busindja (1) tradition, the Kissaka rulers were Basinga.

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1. Van Thiele, Father H., "Businza unter der Dynastie der Bahinda [Businza under the Bahinda Dynasty]," Anthropos, 1911, p. 499.

One of these rulers was married to Nyakachende, the daughter of Ruhinda, and she bore him a successor. From then on the rulers of Kissaka were referred to as Bayango of Ruhinda.

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in Kiziba as a Bahima spirit. This is confirmed by the fact that during the initiation ceremonies the female representative of Ryangombe [307] drinks only millet beer. This points to the steppes northeast of the Victoria-Nile from whence, according to tradition, the Batutsi-Bahima once immigrated.

The relationship of the secret cult with the Batutsi stratum is most vividly characterized by the fact that in Kissaka, as well as in the rest of Ruanda, there are many Christians who are Bahutu, but almost none who are Batutsi. The superior social organization of the country makes possible the spread of Christianity. This is also demonstrated by the many Bahutu converts. Among the Batutsi, however, Christianity collides with another well-organized cult which can nullify its progress.

Father Paul Loupias represents the view that the Ryangombe cult is a Bahutu cult. In support of this theory he mentions that a king's son consecrated to Ryangombe, for example, Ishirangabo, the brother of Musinga, loses the right to become king.

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The conception of the kingdom of dead souls and the great power of Ryangombe, whose name one does not dare pronounce without trembling and to whom only the consecrated may offer sacrifices, is in sharp contrast to the idea of the spirits of dead ancestors who remain in intimate contact with the living Bahutu, who live with them, are fed and cared for by them. This contrast permits the assumption that we have here a mixture of very different ideas. Without doubt we are confronted here in the field of religion with the difference between two cultures which have affected each other, the Batutsi and the Bahutu.

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Fig. 163. Biheko Iron Rods from Mulera. (1/6 actual size. III E13770 and III E13727. Length, 130 and 111 centimeters.)

266 the blood tax, is said to have existed until just a few years ago.
782 The Bahutu of Bukunzi in Mukinjaga once stole the cows of King
651 Ruganzu and ate them. The next morning the herdsmen found
pieces of meat hanging on spears; that was all there was left of
the animals. The criminals were recognized by their spears. As
a punishment their country was burdened with a special tax.
Every year they were obliged to deliver a maiden and a youth.
The youth was slain on the way, and his blood brought to the king;
the young girl became a muja (slave) of the king. I heard that this
sacrifice was last paid three years ago (1904) and then was dis-
continued by Musinga.

• [643] Furthermore, when the king ascends the throne, a boy and
a girl are reputedly sacrificed and a drum is beaten with a human
thigh bone (1). We must not forget that in Buganda (2) human

1. Parisch, F.R. Von, "Zwei Reisen
durch Ruanda 1902-1903 [Two Journeys
Through Ruanda]," Globus, Vol. 86
(1904), p. 77.

[113]

2. Roscoe, J., The Baganda, Their Customs
and Beliefs (London, 1911), p. 331.

beings were sacrificed in large numbers.

266 [328] Cannibalism is said to be practiced by the Batwa in
575 the north and by poisoners (baloni). Koch (1) confirms its occurrence
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1. Koch, R., "Anthropologische
Beobachtungen gelegentlich einer
Expedition an den Victoria Nyanza
[Anthropological Observations on
an Expedition to Lake Victoria
Nyanza]," Zeitschrift für Ethnologie,
1908, p. 465.

among the balogu of the western shore of Lake Victoria: "It is a
fact that at present there is still a secret order here which digs
up corpses and eats them, and for this reason the families station

644 3. Abakono.

4. Abagisere, totem, *enyamansi*, wagtail.

Sub-divisions:

(a) Abasinga, totem, *enyamansi*, and *lubombo*, a cow.

(b) Abazigaba, " "

(c) Abatyaba, " "

5. Abazigaba.

6. Abasinga.

7. Abawungara.

[582] The members of this clan intermarry and also marry people from outside tribes and from the clans Abakongole, Abaswere and Abasinga, but not from other clans, for these four clans were despised people and men of other clans would not marry girls from them.

8. Abatyaba, totem, *enyamansi*. Abanyiginya and Abega clans refuse to marry girls from this clan.

9. Abasindi, totem, *wepehki* and *efuli*.

10. Abakongole.

11. Abasambo, totem, *epw* and a house burned down and lightning. These came from Ankole.

12. Abaswere.

GOVERNMENT

● 643 The head of the country was the king, whose title was 692 *Omwami* or *Mugabe*, and all important cases had to be brought to his court (*Kamera*) for trial. The king, however, did not 634 appoint the great chiefs or *Abatwala*, for their offices were [428] hereditary and they had been appointed by former kings, who divided the land into some forty districts and put a district chief over each. When, however, a district chief died leaving a son who was too young to manage the estate, the king appointed a guardian, often a brother of the dead chief, who administered the estate until the real chief was old enough. The new chief might then give his guardian a chieftainship under him and retain him as an advisor. If the guardian did not receive or accept such an office, he went to the king, who found him some post.

634 Each district chief was the magistrate in his own district; 693 but appeal might be made from his jurisdiction to the court [203] of the king, to which the chiefs were summoned by crier, for

After the mourning the heir was purified by an elder of the clan, and he then took the mourning garment and buried it in some secret place. The mourners shaved their heads and hid the hair. A medicine-man decided whether the house of the dead man might still be inhabited or not. If the people were permitted to remain there, they, the place, and the pots had to be purified; but if they had to go they gave the pots and furniture away and left the house to fall down. [765] [783]

The heir was purified again by an elder of the clan and then went to buy a cow, which he took to the king, whom he was not on this occasion allowed to see. The next day he visited the king, taking a present of a young bull, and informed him of the death. This reception constituted his acknowledgment by the king as the dead man's heir, but if he proved unsatisfactory he might later be dismissed from the chieftainship. [768] [643] [431] [428]

The heir took all his father's widows except old women and his own mother. He even took widows with children, and the children regarded him as their father. [587]

When a married man lost his father he lived apart from his wife for two months, and on the death of his mother he avoided his wife for one month.

THE STUDY OF NATIVE COURT RECORDS

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An instance which shows a number of these possibilities comes²¹⁷ from the court book of Bugufi, a chiefdom in the north-west of Tanganyika Territory. A custom which might or might not be noted by the ethnographer—something must escape the most meticulous of²³³ observers, and this one is not recorded by Meyer for the Barundi, of⁴³ whom the people of Bugufi are ethnologically part—is the right of the chief to pasture his cattle among the millet-stalks after the harvest, before the peasant may put in his own cattle or any which he is herding for some one else. The court book records eight peasants coming to court to complain against a Tusi who has driven off their⁴²³ cattle. The Tusi replies that the men had pastured their cattle in their millet before the chief had had access. Asked by the court whether he was instructed to drive off the cattle, the Tusi replies that he acted as he was bound to do in accordance with ancient custom and his obligations to the chief. New concepts have, however, found their way into the court, which gives judgement for the plaintiffs on the grounds that the land and the cattle were theirs. This case is exceptional in the wealth of statement and suggestion which it offers, but there are many others helpful in lesser degree. [694]

The value of native court records in this way was brought home to me while stationed in this area, Bugufi, during the years 1929-31,²¹⁷ when I went through the available material with a view to seeing what were the normal causes of litigation and getting a general idea of the law administered. Starting with the year 1924, the series was examined up to the end of 1930. For these seven years, 830 cases were found where judgement issued, there being a further 225 which had been settled out of court or dismissed for want of prosecution or by reason of limitation. Of these 830 cases, almost one-quarter concerned contracts where cattle were involved, nearly one-sixth were marital cases,^[673] and another sixth were over administrative matters, including offences against the Native Authority Ordinance: only one-seventh were of offences against person and property, and the remainder concerned debts, land, inheritance, damage to property and a few miscellaneous matters.

The fullest records were those of the numerous marital cases, and²⁷ these have been fully collated with a view to giving an idea of how²¹⁷ much information can be gleaned and what gaps remain, and what

12 THE PREMISE OF INEQUALITY IN RUANDA

174 Ruanda, Burundi, Ha, Karagwe). It is not known where these
101 pastoralists came from.

[119] Because of cultural and physical similarities the Galla or Somali country of Southern Abyssinia has been advanced as their possible place of origin. As the invaders have completely adopted the Bantu language of the agriculturists, the lack of linguistic clues so important in such questions is a great setback to any historical reconstruction. It should be noted in this connexion that the use of the linguistic term 'Hamites' to denote Tutsi, who do not speak a Hamitic language at all, is unfortunate and misleading. Dr. Meinhard's suggestion of using a term not burdened with linguistic connotations such as 'Ethiopians' or 'Ethiopoids' should be considered.¹¹ The population movement which brought the
174 invaders to Ruanda is probably at least four centuries old. The
643 present ruler is traditionally the fortieth king of Ruanda. We know the names of thirty-nine predecessors, but it is possible that the list is incomplete. On the other hand it seems that the first nineteen are legendary figures. Taking account of this and assuming that a reign lasts about twenty years, we go back to the sixteenth century.¹²

174 As the Tutsi migration seems to have been gradual and peaceful, an infiltration rather than a conquest, it is probable that at the beginning their cattle grazed on the unoccupied grasslands. But the population increased as more Tutsi kept on entering the country and more land had to be tilled to feed them. Cattle were also increasing and the Hutu had to move from the most fertile soil, in the bottom of valleys, because during the dry season these places were the only ones where cattle could find fresh grass. This process must have been in operation for a few centuries to produce the situation as we know it now.

[161] Statistics are not available for the 1900-10 period, with which
[174] this study is concerned, but we may from the present figures (with some modifications) get a fairly good idea of the situation at the beginning of this century. The population was estimated on 31 December 1949, to be 1,870,410 souls: in 1956, 2,374,136, which

¹¹ Cf. Meinhard, 1947a, p. 3.

¹² According to Meyer, 1913, the pastoral invasion took place in two ways. The first, at the beginning of this millenium reached the north-east of the Province; the second, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries brought them farther southward. According to Kagame and Delmas, the first Hamitic populations invaded the country in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. (*Gouvernement du Ruanda-Urundi*, (1936), p. 9.

THE SYSTEM OF KINSHIP AND AFFINITY

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marriage coming from another inzu or to be made to another inzu, and whether the council thought that a connexion with such or such lineage was to be accepted, sought, or avoided. A certain number of disputes that the lineage head could not or would not settle alone were submitted to the council. When somebody had lost his cattle and was ruined, the council could determine and apportion a collective contribution to help him out of his difficulties. Finally, blood-feuds were discussed. When a member of the group had been killed by a member of another all the kinsmen of the victim attempted to retaliate by taking of the life of a kinsman of the offender. Compensation was not usual. I was told, however, by the Hutu of Bugoyi that there the murderer's group could prevent the taking of vengeance by handing over a beautiful girl. Political authority kept the feuds under strict control. Permission to retaliate had to be obtained from the king and when it was granted and vengeance had been achieved, the feud was at an end. No further vengeance could be taken. Sometimes the king made representatives of the two lineages share a meal.

As the preceding paragraphs suggest, there was no clear-cut division between the powers of the head and of the council. It was a question of the particular traditions in each inzu and of the individual characters of the persons concerned. Usually, however, the inzu was an oligarchy rather than a monarchy. The head could not rule in opposition to the men of standing in his lineage; they had the means to put pressure on him and then there was the possibility of recourse to the political chiefs, always glad to interfere in a domain which was not completely under their control.

The obligations and rights of the individual members of a primary patrilineage were many. There was first a prohibition on sexual intercourse within the group, which applied to relations whether in or out of wedlock. It was feared that the mating of descendants from the same inzu ancestor would produce sickly and malformed children. A few informants add that exogamy was necessary to promote connexions between descent-groups, these connexions being thought of as beneficial in a vague way. The Ruanda did not distinguish incestuous relations from prohibited relations because of consanguinity. For them all the latter were incestuous. But they recognized order in the degrees of gravity in

72 THE PREMISE OF INEQUALITY IN RUANDA

585 Firstly, all these ceremonies did not take place when the bride had already been married before or when the girl had been struck by lightning because, as I was told, she was considered to have been raped by the king (thunder being one of the symbols of the king). Secondly, the spreading of the herbs and milk mixture had to be done by surprise and the girl had to cry immediately afterwards. Thirdly, in the first intercourse the girl had to struggle and penetration had to be achieved by force.

For about ten or twelve days the young couple lived semi-secluded in a hut in the groom's father's homestead. Then, at the end of that period, there was another ritual celebration (*gutwikurura*) attended by those who were present at the marriage. The central rite of the ceremony was a dance by the new couple in public. After that, the young wife was allowed to cook for her husband for the first time. The latter was given by his father his share of inheritance, and the couple settled in a compound of their own. Residence was occasionally neolocal but usually patrivirilocal (at the HuFa's).

(d) *Polygynous unions*

595 Ruanda may be said to be a polygynous society in two senses. Firstly, polygynous unions were culturally preferred. Secondly, probably thirty per cent. of the unions were polygynous.⁷ It was no grand scale polygyny. A man rarely had more than four wives. Usually a polygynous Tutsi had two wives, a Hutu three or four, and a Twa two.

550 Supplementary wives were an economic asset for rich people, as a Tutsi having herds of cattle in different places found it very useful to be able to put a wife in each of his homesteads as manager; but if he had only such cattle as he could care for himself, a second wife was an expense. It was the same for a Hutu: if he had so many plots that he could not cultivate them all by himself and with the help of his wife, a second one was very useful. If not, she was rather expensive.

640 To have several wives was also to have many children, which were very highly valued by all Ruanda. For Tutsi occupying very high positions, plural union was a means of establishing useful

119 ⁷ 'Any society in which plural unions, however strongly favoured, actually occur in less than this percentage (set arbitrarily at 20 per cent.) of all marriages, is considered monogamous with respect to the family [...]' (Murdock, 1949, p. 28).

MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY

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physiological aspect of sexuality. They do not seem to have thought of sexual relations as the fulfilment of a romantic love between two individuals meant to mate with each other and nobody else. The way spouses were chosen by the two patrilineages prevented any such ideas, for the choosing of spouses rested on the assumption that any boy and any girl of the right age and reasonably attractive could be good partners in marriage and sexuality. But feelings of sympathy and affection developed later as a result of their life together rather than as its basis. According to our informants, love, in the sense of attractiveness based on individual characteristics, was greater in non-marital relations. 'One slept with a certain woman to make her happy because one liked her,' I was told. 831 581

Various prohibitions and obligations indicate how sexuality in marriage was related to events concerning the community and the patrilineage. During the mourning period for the husband's father and mother, which lasted one, two or three months according to the region, intercourse was prohibited for both husband and wife. It was also prohibited for one moon after the death of the wife's child, and for two or three moons for the surviving spouse when one of the spouses died. The meaning of this taboo was not only that one had to refrain from enjoying oneself when one should have been in sorrow. It meant also a certain symbolic participation in death or in the diminution of life affecting the patrilineage. This is, I think, what informants have in mind when they say in this connexion that sex is a sacred activity. This interpretation seems to be supported by what happened when a king died. Not only had all Ruanda to be continent for a certain period (some informants said two moons, others one year), but the bulls were separated from cows and rams from sheep. The king (*mwami*) was identified with Ruanda. If he was strong, Ruanda was strong, if he was getting old and weak, he had to commit suicide because he endangered the country's life. In that context, if animals were prevented from mating it was to express symbolically the idea of the death of the community rather than, it seems, to deny them pleasure. 834 765 765 831

On the other hand, intercourse was obligatory when events fortunate for the patrilineage or the community at large occurred. For instance when a new hut was occupied, when six days had passed after the birth of a child, when the first teeth of the baby 833

421 different uses of the same thing. For instance, one person could have the right to sow a plot and to collect the harvest and another to use it for grazing purposes at another time of the year. Neither of them was considered as the owner letting somebody else use his property as a pasture or as a ground for cultivation.

423 On each pasture, cultivated plot or forest area, the king had a
643 right very similar to the *dominion eminens* of Roman law, the kind of public ownership that a State has over the land within the borders. But he had also the right to prevent, if he chose to do so, somebody from using a particular tract of land in any way at all, which amounts to saying that the mwami had over land a right potentially superior to that of anybody else. The mwami's rights could be opposed to 'private rights'. In fact, the king very rarely insisted on this use of his rights and then only when he wanted to punish somebody who was guilty of disobedience or of some other crime.

423 The land chief's and cattle chief's rights to fields and pastures
651 will be considered later in the section dealing with the administration. Suffice it to say here that these tax-collectors had the right to evict people for certain offences and to allocate land to newcomers in their districts.

423 The person endowed with rights on land for cultivation
425 purposes was the head of a family (*rugo*). Mostly these rights came
[428] to him from his father's inheritance. Sometimes, however, it was a part of the bush that he had himself cleared. If he had not received enough from his father to support his family, he extended his plot in this way with the agreement of the political authority. If, because of a dispute with his brothers, he wanted to move elsewhere and the land chief could not allocate him a field already prepared at the place where he wanted to settle, he did the same. Such a plot was called *bukonde* as long as it was occupied either by the man who had cleared it or by his descendants. A third source of cultivation rights was the assignment by the land chief of a plot already prepared (*inkungu*). The former user of it had either to be evicted by the authority, or had left, or had died without heirs.

In the same way the family head had the right to use a certain area as pasture for his cattle either by inheritance, or by felling the trees of a tract of forest or by having it conceded by the cattle chief.

000 At the end of the nineteenth century the insu had no collective

ECONOMIC PRODUCTION

At the end of the nineteenth century the ⁹¹inzu had no collective rights over certain areas except in the north of Ruanda (Mulera, 613 Rwankeri, Bushiru, Bigogwe) where the Tutsi occupation had 423 been more superficial. I have been told that there the soil belonged to the patrilineage and that there was no land or cattle chief. From the point of view of the individual, however, the situation was very similar: he inherited a share of his father's tract. The difference was that, if the part were insufficient, he had to apply for more [425] to the lineage head instead of to the land-chief, and a plot left without heirs returned to the patrilineage instead of the political authority.

The person entitled to the use of a plot could not sell his right 423 but could let the tract. The rent was about one hoe every other 427 year plus a jug of beer each harvest. The tenant was not permitted to settle by building a hut or planting banana trees.

The Twa resented very much the expansion of fields and pastures 311 in the forests they regarded as their possession. The authority was not concerned with the way they divided it into hunting areas.¹

2. RIGHTS OVER CATTLE

The rights over each head of cattle were also manifold. Property 422 in the Western sense was split up into different aspects.

A global right existed over all Ruanda cattle, even sheep and 422 goats, by which the king could claim actual possession of any of 643 them. The mwami used this right more frequently, it seems, over cattle than over land. An important chief indulging in intrigues [662] regarded as dangerous by the king might find himself dispossessed of all his cattle. The king's right over all the cattle of Ruanda was a constant threat which seems to have very effectively deterred the Tutsi of the ruling set from becoming too independent.

Another right was very similar to our bare ownership. The 422 person who had it was not in possession of the cow but could at any time claim possession of the animal and the heifers and cows produced by that beast since the time when the possession had been transferred. This was the right of the lord (*shabuja*).

In contrast there was the usufruct right with respect to cattle. The person endowed with it could dispose of the milk, the male increase of the cattle, and the dead cows. This was the typical right of the client (*garagu*).

¹ For a more extended account of the land tenure system in traditional Ruanda, see Maquet and Naligiski, 1957.

428 without having been cursed but by being guilty of some major disobedience or lack of respect towards his father, such as beating him. The father could also give a greater share to the sons he preferred, but this had to be justified on grounds other than his personal feelings. It had to appear as a reward for particular devotion or good behaviour. The father could not skip a category of traditionally defined successors and still less could he leave his rights to non-relatives. The persons who felt that they had been wronged could always appeal to the different authorities mentioned.

428 As may be expected, matters of inheritance were causes of
518 suspicion, rivalries, and disputes among the sons. Each wanted to
be favoured by his father. Even if there was no will, an equal
division of goods and rights so different in kind was not easy to
[430] achieve, particularly in a society without money or any other
standard of value.³

4. LABOUR

461 Much labour had to be expended on the soil and on the stock
to produce consumer goods. It was, therefore, not sufficient for
466 the producer to possess a certain amount of capital (land, cattle),
he had also to control labour. What were his rights over the labour
of various individuals?

593 The labour of wives, unmarried sons, and daughters belonged
461 almost exclusively to the father, head of the rugo. He could make
all these dependants work in the rugo fields and he could require
his sons to give tribute labour to the political authorities in his
stead or to carry out services for his lord.

466 The different political authorities had rights over the labour
of their subjects. These rights were limited either to certain
tasks (e.g. to build or to mend the chief's enclosure), or to certain
periods of time (e.g. two days each week). The mwami, the
[43] supreme political authority, did not usually require more than a
chief but in theory all the men of Ruanda belonged to him and
he could demand all their labour as well as take their lives.

According to the 'agreement' by which the lord granted the
usufruct on certain cows, the client had, in return, to give a not
precisely limited number of days of work. These labour rights
and duties were inherited with the bare ownership and the usu-
fruct of the cattle.

³ See also Bourgeois, 1934, pp. 344 ff.

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It is still less easy to assess the relative importance of land and cattle taxes. Informants say that in the past they had to give a great deal, but such recollections of taxpayers do not mean very much. It is certain that if such a fiscal system has been maintained for numerous generations, exploitation has been kept within bearable limits. In Ruanda, as elsewhere, if the taxpayer is overburdened with dues and levies to such a point that he has not enough time and food left to go on producing, the source of impositions will dry up. Fifty years ago, after long practice, the Ruanda rulers had been able, it seems, by trial and error, to determine the exact amount of exploitation that the country could support. Yet if the group of taxpayers as such were not over-exploited, it is certain that some individuals in the group have been very heavily taxed merely because those who had the power to impose taxes wanted to avenge a particular offence.

The taxpaying group was not restricted to the Hutu stratum since some tributes were due on cattle holdings. Agricultural dues and tribute labour however, were entirely provided by Hutu and as they constituted about ninety per cent. of the population, the total amount of their contribution was considerably higher than that of other groups.

Those who received benefit from this system were, first of all, the king and his spouses. They did not have to come and live in a district residence to have the use of the produce collected in that district. Goods were sent to the court or wherever the king wanted them. Other beneficiaries were the chiefs in charge of the collection: land-, cattle-, and hill-chiefs. About two-thirds of the impositions on agricultural produce was deducted by them. Were they all Tutsi? No, answered the Tutsi interviewed. According to ninety-two per cent. of them a Hutu could be appointed land-chief. But he could not become a cattle-chief, according to ninety-one per cent. This is quite understandable, as the first had to deal with Hutu and the second with Tutsi. But were many Hutu in fact endowed with the profitable responsibilities of the land-chief or the hill-chief? 158 informants (eighty-six per cent.) were able to give the names of Hutu land-chiefs, but they mentioned only thirty-four different names. A Hutu land-chief, Ndarwubatsc, was mentioned 180 times, another, Kanyonyomba, 109 times, and another, Segore, ninety-seven times. As our informants were scattered throughout Ruanda it is very probable that the cases of

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189 To provide the central government with regular revenues, to
[49] maintain its predominant and privileged situation, and to favour
social cohesion, were the functions of the administrative structure.
634 Moreover, as any authority in Ruanda, the land-chief was judge
622 in the disputes concerning rights over land. The cattle-chief,
however, had no judicial capacity because disputes about cattle
were dealt with by the army-chief.

121 Impositions and taxes exist in all societies which have a central-
ized organization of political power. Rulers to maintain their
dominant position need to be able to dispose of great revenues.
The more centralized a government is, the larger is the amount of
goods needed because the administrative officers are numerous.¹³

This political necessity of taxation has been justified differently
according to the ideology of each culture.¹⁴ Thus in modern
democratic states, taxes are said to be the contribution of each
citizen to the maintenance of services used by all members of the
community, such as roads open to everybody, a police force which
protects property and life against internal dangers, courts and
tribunals for those who feel that they have been wronged and want
to obtain reparation, an army which protects the community
against an external threat, &c.

643 In Ruanda, tributes in labour and goods to the mwami were
justified by the nature of the royal power. Kingship was divine.
[173] The first king of Ruanda, Nkuba (which means lightning), lived
in heaven with his wife Nyagasani, their two sons Kigwa and
Mututsi, and their daughter, Nyampundu. One day the three
siblings fell from heaven and settled on a Ruanda hill. There
[619] Kigwa married his sister. Their descendants constituted the
Abanyiginya clan. Mututsi, Kigwa's brother, married one of his
nieces. Their descendants were the Abega. The two royal clans
(usually the Abanyiginya married Abega girls) had thus a divine
origin.¹⁵ From this godlike nature of the mwami followed the
justification of his absolute power and of the sovereignty of his
rights over the people, the cattle, and the land of Ruanda. By
virtue of that divine sovereignty, the king could require tribute.
Because everything and everybody was his, he could confiscate
any cattle or agricultural produce, and take the labour or even the
life of anybody.

643 This was the theory. In fact the mwami did not use his prerogatives
183 more than the rulers who were not divine but had the same means

¹³ Maquet, 1952.

¹⁴ Maquet, 1954c, p. 63.

¹⁵ See Page, 1933, p. 491.

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of coercion at their disposal. If a mwami attempted to go beyond his effective power even without exceeding the limits of his divine rights, he exposed himself to the chance of meeting some obstacles. Nevertheless, he had sovereign as well as divine rights and his subjects were constantly reminded of these by the tributes they had to pay. 643 183

4. DESCRIPTION OF THE MILITARY STRUCTURE

Every Ruanda, Twa, Hutu as well as Tutsi, was affiliated to an army (*ingabo*). This is stated by ninety-nine per cent. of our informants. Although this military organization is obsolete at the present day—indeed it no longer exists—ninety-eight per cent. of the Tutsi interviewed can still give the name of the army of their paternal ascendants. 701 [198]

There were several armies. The name of each one had a military meaning. It was a challenge, a boast, the memory of a dynastic or historical event: for instance 'the tough ones' (*abashakamba*), 'the first to be praised' (*imbanzamihigo*), 'the fearless ones' (*inzirabwoba*), &c. At the beginning of each reign a new army was organized by the king. Moreover, a very important chief could be authorized by the mwami to raise an army.

(a) Recruitment

An army was recruited in the following way. The mwami asked his Tutsi clients to bring to the court their sons who had not yet had any military training. When about 150 to 200 young men were gathered, they constituted what we may call a company (*itorero*). During the reign, four or five companies were recruited in the same way and were added to the first one. According to ninety-six per cent. of our informants a man had to stay all his life in the company he had first entered. The young men (the chosen ones) lived at the court of the king or of the chief who had been allowed to recruit an army. Under the direction of an officer called the chief of the king's residence (*umutware w'urugo rw'umwami*) or of its counterpart at a chief's court, they were trained for several years in military skills such as bow and arrow shooting, the use of the sword, spear, and javelin. They learned warlike dances, and to memorize and to recite the poems in which the high deeds of extraordinary bravery and boldness of the past warriors were exalted. 702 704 [411] [538]

They were also taught how to compose poems in imitation of these great models.
See Kagame, 1949b; 1951.

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705 a member of the warriors' section, and a member of the herds-
422 men's section.

The mwami could effectively dispose of the *nyambo* and *mabara*. *Nyambo* were cows which had some marked physical characteristics (as for instance long horns). The mere fact that beasts had such characteristics gave the king exclusive rights of disposal of them whatever may have been the previous rights of other people over them. Many lyrical poems were devoted to the praise of *nyambo* in which they are divided into two 'clans', the brown one (*ibihogo*) and the red-brown (*amagaju*) which were supposed to be in a permanent state of war.¹⁷ A herd of *nyambo* numbered about fifty cows. There were not *nyambo* with every army. *Mabara* were ordinary cows, not fulfilling the *nyambo* qualifications, and of which the mwami had the effective disposal. One or several herds of *nyambo* and *mabara* were entrusted by the king only to certain armies.

The cows over which the army-chief had the rights of effective disposal were also considered, according to ninety-six per cent. of our informants, as army cattle and were tended by the army herdsmen.

Cattle at the effective disposal of each member of the herdsmen's section of the army were also regarded as army cattle. Here we have to distinguish between cattle possessed as a client and cattle not obtained from a lord (ninety-two per cent. of our informants said that one could have cattle which were not received from a lord). The former kind of cattle were linked to the lord's army and not to the client's army although the client had the right of usufruct and of effective disposal (as defined here) over that cattle. The latter kind of cattle was composed of cows obtained by exchange (*impahano*) which were regarded as army cows according to ninety-five per cent. of our informants; of cows given by the prospective husband to his father-in-law (*indogoranyo*) also according to ninety-five per cent.; of cows received as reward for brave conduct in war (*ingororano mu ntambara*) again according to ninety-five per cent.; of cows received as gifts (*inka s'ubuntu*) according to ninety-six per cent. Cows not kept by somebody as a client were called by the generic name of *imbata*, or, according to sixty-two per cent. of our informants, the mwami's cows (*inka s'umwami*), which is confusing.

¹⁷ Kagame, 1947b, p. 79a.

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721 conquest: the procession of the victorious warriors, and the recitation of poems telling of the achievements of heroes. The whole country was mystically committed in the expedition through the king, the country's personification, who was magically taking part in it. The king and the queen-mother had (as the expedition leader) to sit motionless during the day of the battle (the army-chief in the field when deciding when to attack had to take into account the space of time necessary for a messenger to reach the court). The secrecy about the expeditions stressed their importance. Even after the battle was over, a messenger was sent to the court who could not tell anything about the expedition except that it was over. Then a few warriors were chosen by the army-chief to go and tell the king—and the king only—the story of the battle.

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725 Ruanda was an aggressive neighbour. Its history, as it appears in the old traditions collected by Father Pages for instance, is made up of numerous wars of annexation. The Abanyiginya dynasty started from about the centre of the present day Ruanda and expanded their domination progressively.

They were never permanently at peace with their neighbours, and when they had an alliance with some of them it was in order only to be free to concentrate their forces on others. They used any means that could ensure domination. In addition to direct attacks, they interfered in quarrels between smaller neighbours, helping one against the other and then overcoming both; they even murdered the chiefs and kings of small states.¹⁰ Besides the territorial annexations they raided neighbouring countries for captives and cattle.

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186 From the Ruanda point of view this policy of imperialism and looting did not require any rationalization. Their ethical obligations were limited to in-group relationships. One could not kill, steal from, or harm another Ruanda, but a foreigner was fair game. Ruanda people thought themselves to be quite different from people of other tribes, their land was the most important in the world and the country where Imana (the high god) came home every evening and spent the night. It was consistent with these beliefs to use out-group people for one's own purposes without the need for further justification.

080 The Ruanda military structure appears thus to have been in its

¹⁰ See for instance Pages, 1933, pp. 121 f.; pp. 298 ff.; pp. 554 ff.

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PLATE 3

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The late king, Charles Mutara Rudahigwa

[Facing p. 118]

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 The army organization was also a factor for maintenance of the
 701 social order by the protective function of the army-chiefs. A
 minimum of individual security must be granted to every member
 of a society. The support of the army-chief secured partly that
 minimum of security. The protection against incursions of enemies
 was also provided by the army as such. Finally, the participation of
 [564] Hutu and Twa in foreign expeditions, although extremely re-
 [186] stricted, certainly contributed to the formation of a Ruanda
 'national' feeling.

6. THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

642 In the administrative and military structures, the king was the
 supreme political authority of Ruanda. Very closely associated with
 him was the queen-mother, who had an official role in the political
 sphere. Next, the highest dignitaries of the kingdom were the *biru*,
 guardians of traditions concerning the important events of the
 collective life of Ruanda. Finally, there was the council of the great
 chiefs. These four institutions may be regarded as having con-
 stituted the main element of the central government of Ruanda.

(a) The king

643 The theory of the Ruanda kingship was that the mwami was an
 absolute monarch in the fullest sense. There was no stated limit to
 his powers over the inhabitants, cattle, land, and even com-
 modities of his country. His powers were not delegated by any
 authority and thus he had not to render an account of them to
 anybody. He was the supreme judge: his sentences were without
 appeal. He was the legislator having the right to change customs.

This theory of the king's powers was founded on their divine
 origin as mentioned earlier. The bami (plural of mwami) were very
 careful not to let their subjects forget their heavenly origin. Many
 rites stressed that they did not participate in the common nature
 of other men. This was also the reason why special words were
 used to indicate their common activities and the everyday objects
 they used (as for 'to get up', 'it is raining on the king's hut', 'his
 bed', 'his house', etc.). It was thus emphasized that in spite of their
 appearances, these activities and objects were fundamentally
 different from what they were for ordinary people.²²

In fact the king's powers were of course limited. He had to
 respect the vested interests of important Tutsi lineages, he had to

²² Page, 1933, pp. 491 f.

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refrain from decisions which could have impaired the economic production of the country, such as requiring tributes which were too heavy, or which could have lowered the level of personal security to such an extent that people would have preferred to flee abroad.³³ Moreover, profound legislative modifications would have roused the resistance of the *biru*. Nevertheless, his powers were still extremely great. A fact which reinforced and consolidated them was the tradition of the long past of the dynasty. The present mwami, Mutara III Rudahigwa is regarded as the fortieth king of Ruanda. Even if the first twenty names are considered as legendary, three or four centuries is a considerable past for a dynasty. The Abanyiginya clan has indeed been able to keep the kingship of Ruanda as long as kings are remembered.

The mwami was not only of divine origin but he was Ruanda personified. This mystical identification with the country resulted in numerous avoidances and a very careful behaviour was expected from the mwami. What happened to him would reverberate, as it were, over the country. He should not bend his knees, for instance, lest Ruanda's territory would shrink.

Royal succession was not completely fixed by custom. The heir was chosen by the king from among his sons. He was generally one of the youngest because the strength of Ruanda was magically connected with the king's strength. The name of the chosen one was kept secret. Even the future mwami did not know it. It was revealed only after the king's death by the three most important *biru* whom the mwami had entrusted with his decision. The other sons and their mothers generally did not agree willingly to the choice and there was often a period of unrest, even of civil war, before the new mwami became an effective ruler.³⁴

A new name was given to the new king, one of the five royal names which were chosen according to the same sequence: Cyirima, Kigeli, Nibambwe, Yuhi, Mutara. The kings named Cyirima, Yuhi, and Mutara were called 'peaceful bami'. They were not allowed to cross the Nyabarongo, a river which runs in the centre of the country, not far from Nyanza, the capital, and this symbolized the fact that they should not send their armies abroad. This rule very wisely allowed the country to recuperate and to assimilate new territories conquered during a preceding warlike reign.

³³ Maquet, 1953.³⁴ See Gluckman, 1954, p. 8.

643 534 The symbol of kingship was Kalinga, the sacred drum. To possess this drum meant to be king. Kalinga was regularly sprinkled with the blood of the animals used for divination. Around Kalinga were hung the genitals of Ruanda enemies killed by the bami. Kalinga was never beaten but other drums were beaten in its honour as they were beaten for the king.²⁸

(b) *The queen-mother*

644 It was essential that the role of queen-mother (*umugabekasi*) should always be fulfilled. If the mwami's mother's death occurred when her son was still living, he had to be given another 'mother'. The queen-mother had no special task, but she shared the royal prerogatives. She lived at the king's capital where she had her own court, and her protection was eagerly sought. She had herds of cattle and clients. But her role should not be regarded as independent of that of the king.

It can be said that the same kingship was realized by two persons at the same time, without any division of responsibilities or privileges. This was expressed by the term often used to designate together the mwami and his mother: the kings (*abami*). In that partnership the king, however, kept a predominant position: when he died, his mother completely lost her powers.

(c) *The biru*

645 [793] [794] The *biru* did not constitute a council or a board. They were dignitaries with different tasks and very strictly ranked in a fixed hierarchy. Their activities, however, in common were concerned with the preservation of ritual knowledge and the accomplishment of ceremonies essential to the existence of Ruanda and its government. This knowledge and activities were kept secret from everybody who was not a *mwiru* (singular of *biru*).

[743] *Biru* were under the king's authority in the sense that he could create new offices of *mwiru* and he could dismiss one of them who had been disloyal. The royal control was limited to this. It was really the minimum without which *biru* would have been completely independent of the mwami. The offices were hereditary and even when a *mwiru* had been dismissed one of his sons succeeded him. As we have seen previously, their domains were exempt from any interference of the land- or cattle-chief.

²⁸ Vanheve, 1941, pp. 88 f. See the series of photographs in Maquet, 1957.

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(d) *The council of the high chiefs*

645 The most important chiefs were called *batware w'intebe*, which means chiefs with a stool. Sometimes, especially in times of crisis, the king summoned them and they were consulted on the situation.⁸⁷

645 It seems that the patterns of behaviour in the face-to-face
643 relationships with an authority, particularly the supreme one, were such that an opinion opposed to that of the mwami was very unlikely to be voiced. Consequently, the main use of that council appears to have been for the king to explain what he wanted to do and to elicit suggestions on the means of carrying it out.

One of these chiefs was called the 'favourite counsellor' and acted as a sort of prime minister to the king. Besides the tasks he fulfilled by helping the mwami in administering the kingdom, the favoured counsellor's role included the most useful function of taking the blame for what the mwami did wrong. As the king was divine and essentially good, he could never be criticized even by those who suffered from one of his decisions. To relieve the tensions raised by an arbitrary action of the king, however, it was better that the responsibility for it could be imputed to somebody else. The favourite counsellor was that scapegoat: the victims of a royal decision and their friends could go on saying that the king was good but that his favourite counsellor was very bad and cruel and responsible for what they had suffered. This aspect of the favourite counsellor's role was no small contribution to the feelings of trust that Ruanda had for their ruler.

⁸⁷ Maquet and Hertefeldt, 1959, chap. 1.

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of their different nature which entitled them to rule and as a guarantee against social mobility: because a Hutu was usually not endowed with the Tutsi physical characteristics he could not easily pass the line.

Two other important elements related to the political power system of Ruanda were its extent and its orographic configuration. The country was not very large, about 100 miles from north to south and 140 from west to east. But its relief was that of a maze of hills, many of them very steep, separated by deep valleys. Moreover, it was traversed, from north to south, by a chain of mountains which separate the Congo and Nile basins and is covered with very dense forests inhabited by elephants, leopards, and buffalo.

A centralized government requires good communications. The king must remain, as much as possible, in constant contact with all the regions of his country; tribute must reach the capital regularly, armies must arrive rapidly in any place threatened by an external enemy; local authorities must not be left isolated lest they become too independent. The small extent of Ruanda was indeed an asset from this point of view but this was largely neutralized by the relief which made communications extremely difficult. Notwithstanding these unfavourable physical factors, the mwami had been able to establish and maintain his political network connecting all the subordinate authorities of Ruanda to himself.

These five elements are among those which more significantly affected the domination system of the Tutsi. They are the only ones. Three of them refer to the social power of the Tutsi caste (type of material culture, Tutsi-Hutu ratio, physical appearance), while two others (economy with a small surplus, area, and relief) were operative rather in the sphere of political power. Only two of these background facts (demographic ratio and physical type) were favourable to the domination pattern whereas one (absence of a different material equipment apart from cattle) was neutral and two (lack of a great surplus, geographic configuration) were obstacles.

2. THE SOCIOLOGICAL PROBLEM OF DOMINATION

Within the limits set by these conditions external to the social system, Tutsi had to adapt their organisation in order to keep the dominant position for their caste and its rulers. Their problem

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564 was: how to monopolize social and political power to their benefit
641 without preventing a Ruanda society from existing and functioning
184 as a unity? How to realize an equilibrium between the necessities
of any social life and the necessities of a permanent dominion of a
group? This fundamental problem may be analysed into three
antinomies: maintaining a caste society and promoting the cohesion
of the society as a whole; exploiting and protecting the lower
stratum; delegating powers to subordinate authorities and
establishing a centralized and absolute government. How were
these antinomies solved?

(a) Caste society and social cohesion

564 In order that the members of a dominant and hereditary
554 group may keep their privileges, it is necessary that what gives
422 prestige remains exclusively under their control. We have seen
1558 that in Ruanda the basis of social power and prestige lay in the
effective disposal of cattle. As indicated earlier, the feudal system
permitted the Tutsi to keep complete control of all Ruanda
cattle, as the whole of a client's cattle was always liable to be
confiscated by the lord under any pretence. Moreover, outside the
[643] *buhako* structure, the king kept the pre-eminent right over all
Ruanda cattle. Even if he did not use frequently his rights against
Hutu, they were not forgotten: the very cows which were not
received from a lord but acquired by one's own efforts and over
which the possessor had usufruct plus bare ownership, were
called 'king's cows' (*inka x'umwami*) as often as *imbata*.

554 Usually, an upper caste shows its superiority by, among other
564 things, its leisure and pleasant life. It has to enjoy a greater share
461 of the good things of life than the commoners and it has to get this
apparently without effort, rather as a right than as a reward for
specific tasks. It was again the *buhake* which made it possible for
the Tutsi caste to enjoy 'gracious living' becoming to its high social
status. The man in control of a few head of cattle could, through
the clientage institution, live without having to participate in the
manual work of the production processes.

554 A third requirement for the maintenance of a caste identity is
574 the preservation of the group's *esprit de corps* and traditions and
584 their handing on by one generation to the next one. This was done
186 in the kinship groups mainly by the grandparents, particularly
867 by the paternal grandfather. There, lineage values and particular

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well as Tutsi. They did not feel that they were out-group people. ^{æb}

A fourth factor which counterbalanced the socially disintegrative influence of the caste system was the plurality of the structures in which any Ruanda was affiliated. <sup>564
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Through several structures, subjects were much more efficiently bound among themselves and to their rulers than in a unique hierarchy. In the latter case, indeed, if the individual can extricate himself from that hierarchy, he becomes absolutely unattached. In Ruanda, even if one link was broken, the subject did not escape from his superior chiefs. Indeed, he was linked to them, particularly to the mwami, by more than one tie. Almost any Ruanda was dependent on the king through two hierarchical channels: *via* his hill-chief (who himself was subordinated to the cattle- and land-chief) and *via* his army-chief. In addition, the feudal system integrated him into a set of personal loyalty relations such that the person occupying the superior position in one of these relations is himself an inferior in another relation. ^[571]

It should be mentioned also that any Ruanda was a member of three kin groups: primary and secondary patrilineages and clan. Of course kinship affiliations as such did not cut across caste lines (except for the clan name), but as many of these kinship groups had been for so long established in Ruanda territory, they were certainly a supplementary link between the individual and his country. ^[602]

The network of relations woven by the political and clientage systems was particularly important in a country where there were no clear-cut groupings based on co-residence. This has led some observers to believe that Ruanda were living in a kind of social vacuum. On the contrary, a Ruanda was never isolated: his social links connected him with the authorities and were ramified, if not in the whole territory, at least in a large area of it. ^[571]

The last factor of social cohesion to be mentioned here was the ideology developed around the monarchic institution. The mwami was regarded as the king of all Ruanda and not only of the Tutsi. His divine origin keeping him separate from men, bestowed on him an authority which no commoner thought to question. He was closely connected with Imana, conceived as a supreme god rather remote but benevolent. The mwami, representative of Imana, was the father and protector of all Ruanda. Was it not enough to assume towards him a filial attitude and to feel one's <sup>571
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[796]</sup>

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571 dependency upon him? As in many cultures in which a king is a
 564 paternal and divine image, the Ruanda monarch certainly con-
 184 tributed towards the creation in Ruanda individuals of a feeling of
 belonging to a unit which presented some similarities to a family.

- 693 This was, it seems, how the Ruanda political and feudal struc-
 tures, by their complexity, succeeded in keeping an equilibrium
 564 between, on one hand, the tendencies towards social disintegra-
 182 tion that a caste system necessarily produces and, on the other,
 184 the minimal cohesion necessary to the maintenance of a social
 unit such as a nation.

(b) *Exploitation and protection of Hutu*

728 The Tutsi were confronted with the dilemma that all con-
 querors must solve when they settle on a new territory with the
 intention of staying permanently: are they going to draw
 upon the natural resources of the country themselves, using their
 own labour and equipment, and to remove from the area the
 aboriginal inhabitants by pushing them further on and even by
 exterminating them as a people, or are they to let them stay and
 use them by having them working for their benefit? Europeans who
 settled in North America adopted the first solution, they did not
 attempt to use Indian labour and they expelled the native popula-
 tion from their hunting areas and began to cultivate their country.
 The second method has been chosen in most parts of Africa south
 of the Sahara where Europeans have settled.

[191] Whether Tutsi have explicitly considered this problem is
 564 immaterial here. In fact they have adopted the solution which was
 661 most advantageous to them. Being pastoralists and not numerous
 (in comparison with the Hutu peasants), they had no interest in
 expelling them. If this had been done, they would have had either
 to till the land themselves or to dispense with beer, peas, sorghum,
 &c. It was preferable for Tutsi to adopt what Oppenheimer calls
 the bee-keeper's policy (as opposed to the bear's policy who for the
 purpose of robbing the beehive, destroys it),⁴ that is to say, to
 keep in the country peasants in order permanently to exploit their
 productive work. Those who control territory are not a dominant
 group; it is upon men that power is exerted.

We have seen how, through the political and feudal structures,
 the country's surplus resources were drained and concentrated in

⁴ Oppenheimer, 1932, pp. 63 ff.

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 642 Ruanda rulers were able to check successfully these tendencies
 543 towards the fragmentation of the political unity of their country,
 182 first, by the ritual character of the royal power.

[649] To revolt against the king, identified with Ruanda and supported by Imana, was a sacrilege and a profanation. It is not claimed that such a theory was sufficient to secure the kings with effective power indefinitely. Elsewhere similar ideologies of absolute and divine power of the monarchs have not prevented some of them from being stripped of their real authority, whereas their divine prerogatives were still respected. The ritual sanction does not seem to have had a primary importance in the maintenance of submission to the Ruanda kingship. In 1896 or 1897, a young mwami, Mibambwe IV Rutalindwa, was assailed and eventually lost his life in a revolt instigated by the brother of the queen-mother. That queen-mother was not the mother of the mwami but another wife of his father. Her clan, the Abega, wanted a son of hers as mwami.⁸ This shows that when the king lost effective control of power, ritual sanctions were not an effective safeguard for his prerogatives, or even for his life. This is why it has not been thought necessary to expand on the ritual aspect of the Ruanda kingship. But it certainly was a factor which contributed to the obedience of the Ruanda nobles.

[701] Another check was that the king kept at his disposal the coercive force of the armies. Even if the rebel had the support of one or two armies, the king had all the others.

642 But the main factor which I think prevented local authorities
 578 from asserting their independence from the central government,
 182 was the plural character of the political and feudal organization. In connexion with the maintenance of the effective power of the central government, this plurality of structure was a very effective means of maintaining misunderstanding, hostility, and jealousy among the subordinate chiefs. It is certain that the *shebuja* of our example in the preceding section, would have been only too glad to denounce to the mwami the army-chief if the latter was indulging in suspicious manoeuvres. The co-existence of chiefs of almost the same rank who were constantly induced by their subjects to take sides in disputes was sufficient to create mistrust among themselves. Moreover, conflicts were numerous, particularly when two chiefs had the same territorial power (as in the case of the cattle- and land-chiefs). To settle conflicts they had to resort to the

⁸ Pages, 1933, pp. 193-206.

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182 its own rules, if each infraction were punished strictly according
 183 to prescribed sanctions and if all the formal norms were always
 respected. To be a part of a society is to know which of its rules
 prescribe or prohibit absolutely or conditionally; whether a parti-
 cular action which is not forbidden is nevertheless something that
 is simply "not done"; whether human beings, always imperfect,
 must in any particular case actually be punished or whether the
 offence should be blinked. Exceptions to the formal rules are not
 haphazard. Rather, they are ordered by what may be called
 implicit norms, or secondary or functional norms. These are as
 well known and as well established as norms which are explicit and
 formal. Taken together, the explicit, primary norms and the
 implicit, secondary norms form the "active norms" of the society.
 By means of secondary norms, society can come to terms with the
 social and psychological impossibility of a perfect correspondence
 between the formal norms of the social structure, invented by men
 in the interest of social order, and the actions of men confronted by
 the empirical realities of human existence.

183 Each society has its own calculus of values by which it estab-
 lishes its active norms, the norms to be respected verbally but under-
 stood to be neither practical nor practised, and the rules of punish-
 ment which are to be taken seriously. It will not be possible to
 understand the life of the women of Burundi without knowing both
 the formal norms of the social structure and the secondary,
 functional norms. The life of a Rundikazi is made up of various
 183 elements. To reconstruct it, we shall begin with a description of
 562 women as members of Rundi society, of which they form an
 integral part. We shall then describe women in the specifically
 feminine roles, and we shall conclude with an account of the
 devices used by women to realize the values of their patriarchal
 society.

* * *

631 The Rundi describe their society as a hierarchy ordered by
 643 *Imana*, the Supreme Being, who is at its summit. Among human
 beings, it is the *mwami*, the king, who is superior to all. In the past,
 [795] there was also Kiranga, the legendary head of a possession cult.
 He was said to be of approximately the same rank as the *mwami*.
 Immediately below the king are the *baganwa*, the princes—four
 631 generations of the descendants of a king. The *mwami* and the
 635 *baganwa* are the rulers of the Rundi. In the traditional system, the
 643 power of the *mwami* was defined by his inheritance of absolute
 royal power and of the entire country, together with all its goods,

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as his private property. No Rundi had rights, power, lands, or cows, except as the *mwami* granted. He distributed his lands and cows and administrative power to those of his brothers and parallel cousins who were on his side in the political battles. These *baganwa*, today called "chiefs", become the vassals of the *mwami*. The *baganwa* distributed the lands and cows they received to *batware*, captains, today called "sub-chiefs", who became their vassals and who in turn procured vassals for themselves by giving to their inferiors small plots of land and a cow here and there. Changes resulting from European influence are gradually eliminating the feudal characteristics of the social system. However, the principle and the order of the hierarchy have so far remained unchanged. [631] [635] [613] [634] [177]

Below the princes in the hierarchy are the *abafasoni*, nobles, those who were once princes but who at the fifth generation are no longer and who will one day be numbered among the commoners. To describe the commoners, it is necessary to take account of the three *aboko*, castes—the Tutsi, the Hutu and the Twa. The Tutsi are by far of the highest rank among the commoners. Although they make up only ten per cent of the population, they are the masters of the Hutu, who make up more than 85 per cent of the population. It is believed that the Tutsi are of Hamitic or Nilo-Hamitic origin, whereas the Hutu are clearly a part of the Bantu hoe-culture, characteristic of East and Central Africa. Burundi is beyond doubt a "cattle-complex" country. The Tutsi are herders, and nobody debates the superiority of the herders. It is said that the Tutsi, once formidable warriors, on their arrival in the country about three centuries ago, had no need to conquer the Hutu by using their spears. The Hutu to this day willingly become the serfs of the herders in order to receive cows from them. Between the princes and the Tutsi, there is very little difference in rank. Between the rank of the Tutsi and that of the Hutu, there is a very great difference. The Tutsi and the Tutsikazi disdain the Hutu and the Hutukazi, considering them their born servants. Nevertheless, the princes or the king sometimes appoint Hutu to be *batware*. A Hutu thus honoured is the political superior of the Tutsi under his authority. This circumstance in no way modifies his social inferiority. On the contrary, it exacerbates race prejudice. No social mechanism can change the caste in which an individual is born. The Tutsi do not drink with the Hutu, even when they become administrators, for one does not drink with one's social inferiors. The next downward step in the hierarchy takes us to the bottom of the social ladder and almost outside the society to the [565] [631] [634] [514] [565] [162]

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564 Twa. A pygmoid people, the Twa constitute less than 1.5 per cent
 565 of the population. Potters and hunters in the process of becoming farmers, the Twa are pariahs, excluded almost completely from social relations with all the other Rundi and detested by them.⁸ With ill grace, the Rundi grant that the Twakazi are excellent dancers and that people need the pots that they make.

564 It is by now evident that the Rundi are somewhat sensitive to
 613 differences of rank, but we have by no means exhausted the social distinctions they make. Within each caste there are *abaryango*, patrilineages (literally, "doors"), which are arranged in hierarchical order, more or less as social classes. Distinctions are made among patrilineages which are called very good, good, neither good nor bad, and bad. Thus, a Tutsi of a very good patrilineage is the social superior of a Tutsi in a patrilineage that is merely good or neither good nor bad. The former expects to receive a dowry of at least four cows for his daughter, whereas the others must be satisfied with one. Hutu or Hutukazi of good patrilineages are clearly superior to the other Hutu, and a well-born Twa looks upon the other Twa as his social inferiors. Men and women together at the higher levels are superior to those, both men and women, of the inferior levels, although within each class, the men are superior to the women, and, as a general rule, the older are superior to the younger. Taken altogether, to the childless youngest daughter of one of the bad patrilineages of the Twa, every Rundi without exception is the superior, and every Rundi is inferior to the *mwami*.

[554] Although a woman's caste remains unchanged throughout her
 643 life, her definitive place in society is determined by her marriage. In general, fathers seek spouses for their children from their own caste and class. However, the *mwami* and the more important
 562 *baganwa* take their wives from among a dozen of the very good
 564 Tutsi patrilineages. The Tutsikazi of these patrilineages, through
 644 such marriages, move up in the social hierarchy. They will be the
 582 mothers of princes. The one who becomes the *mwamikazi*, the
 613 queen-mother, will be the most important woman in the country, the superior of most Rundi men. She will receive substantial presents and much respect, and she will have considerable influence
 643 in the affairs of the kingdom. After death, she will have special funeral rites and will be buried in a cemetery reserved for the remains of the queen-mothers. Although almost any woman of a very good Tutsi patrilineage may be called a *mwamikazi*, it is only a figurative way of saying that she is well born. The status of women born in the royal and princely patrilineages is somewhat ambiguous. They will be married by Tutsi of the patrilineages that supply

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and Tutsikazi are tall, dignified and elegant; they know how to give the impression of great control, of intelligence and of refinement. Hutu and Hutukazi are plainly farmers, short and sturdy, clumsy, made for work, and they seem to be vulgar, stupid, incapable of controlling their emotions or of speaking well. Nothing has so far been said of the poor Twa: like the Rundi, we have forgotten them. The Twa, pariahs, are, say the Rundi, without shame. They eat anything, they employ bad language. It is necessary to pay them for the pots their women make, for no Rundi will participate in economic exchanges of gifts and services or in social relations with them. We shall see further on that the stereotypes of superiors and inferiors according to caste can be used also in describing all other superior-inferior relationships.

To complete the description of the hierarchical order of Rundi society, it is necessary to include the kinship system. The familial hierarchy has the same pattern as the social hierarchy. All benefactors are called *umuvyeyi*, parent. The *mwami* is like a benevolent father, it is said, who likes the Rundi, his children. The nursing mother is the symbol of feminine generosity. The best way to thank a benefactress is by means of the formula: I am a nursing child at your generous breasts, or alternatively: you are to me as a freshened cow. The herders sometimes argue about the relative superiority of women and cows; both sources of milk appear to have their partisans.

Whatever the position of an individual in the social hierarchy, he will also have his place in the familial hierarchy. The head of a patrilineage, prince or pariah, is at the summit of the familial hierarchy. He is the *mukuru*, the highest, the oldest by rank, though not necessarily by chronological age. He speaks first, he drinks first, he must be respected and obeyed by his brothers, his sons, and the women of the patrilineage. The household consisting of a man and his wife and children is the smallest independent unit of Rundi society. There, the father of the family is *nyene rugo*, the master of his household. His children and his wife—if he is polygamous, his wives—owe him respect and obedience. Addressed in the familiar by his superiors, the father of the family addresses his inferiors in the familiar, in his capacity as a patriarch of almost absolute power. His wife kneels before him when she offers him his gourd of beer, and his child kneels before him to receive his blessing. (The Old Testament comes inevitably to mind at the sight.) Sons receive a part of their father's property as their inheritance not later than the time they receive a wife but are all their lives subjugated to their father's authority. The father chooses one of his